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Part I

Double Pines' Fics

by Double Pines

She ain't home so scram







by Double Pines

Mabel's Dream Boy

It's everything *Dream Boy High* (and its four fabulous sequels) made it out to be—give or take a few things, of course. *Her* dream boy doesn't have blindingly teal or white or pink hair, and he doesn't play bass or guitar or a drum set with cymbals shaped like stars. But he *does* play the trumpet in band class. And anyway, the idea behind it is the same.

Yes, after years of casual (and during her heightened boy-crazy stages, not so casual) searching, Mabel Pines has finally found her very own perfect, no doubts about it, in-it-for-the-long-haul, dream boy. Turns out he was just hiding in her eleventh grade Algebra 2 class, just waiting for her to find him, so their nearly too-adorable-to-be-true romance could flourish. Which, she did. And, it did.

Dream boy's name? Aiden Zimmerman. With emphasis on the dream part—dreamy, that is. Tall, with dirty blonde hair that's usually styled into a beauteous 'do that's just so perfectly pointy in the front; big blue eyes that make her heart go all ooey-gooley. Oh, and did she mention he's really hot? Like, *whoo*, all that running from being a forward on the school soccer team sure does that boy good... he's also sweet, easygoing, and lets her be her weird self without giving her that judgey-eye thing she's used to getting from a lot of people.

Mabel most definitely lucked out and bagged a good 'un—really, she's got girls jealous of her and everything. Because there's also the fact that Aiden is pretty dang popular, although that was never on her dream boy criteria list. Things just happened to turn out that way. Hey, it's not *her* fault one of the most popular and likable boys at her school happened to fall for her fantabulous beauty and quirky charm. She's just awesome that way.

Aiden has held the prestigious title of 'boyfriend' for the past two months, one week and four days, by far the longest relationship she's ever had. She's had 'boyfriends' in the past, but looking back on it none of those dudes lasted longer than a week or two. Now that she has the real deal, she doesn't even really count those little baby flings as boyfriends anymore (except for Mermando. Who else can say they've dated a merman?).

Gosh, though, Aiden is seriously just the best boyfriend, sometimes Mabel can't even believe how lucky she is. He's always slipping cute love notes in her locker between classes. Always holds her hand as they walk through the halls together. Lets her eat half his fruit roll up every day at lunch. Blows hilarious, over-dramatic kisses to the bleachers where she sits to watch his games as he runs out on the field. And always good for a cuddlefest when they have movie dates at each other's houses. A cuddlefest, or a makeout. Boyfriend makeouts are very important and *very* necessary for her health and wellbeing, Mabel has come to find.

Ah. Mrs. Mabel Zimmerman. Sounds good. Sounds right. She'll miss being a Pines for sure, but man, she swears she's always wanted her future husband's last name to start with a 'Z.' It's undeniably the coolest letter of the alphabet!

Aiden is just, ugh, *perfect*. Almost suspiciously perfect. Nuts to Dipper, who never hesitates to point out how annoyingly cliché her lovestruck sighs are. He doesn't get it. Dipper may have gotten all the math-sci genes, but she's got *romantic* science down to an art. And she's one-hundred-percent certain that her and Aiden are *meant to be*. Their relationship couldn't be better.

... *Okay*, fine, when she says 'couldn't be better,' she actually means 'couldn't be better except for a few things.' Not even a few. There are only two things that she can think of, two things that could stand to be improved upon in terms of her relationship with Aiden, and eyy, that's not a bad number, not a bad number at all.

One—sometimes the guy comes on a little too strong with the tongue game. When they're making out. And she hasn't worked up the courage to critique her boyfriend's kissing skills yet. But hey, of all the boyfriend-girlfriend problems that could happen, this one isn't all that bad. Fixable. One day she'll find a nice way to show him how to lighten up with the spit n' stuff. No big deal.

Two—well. Unfortunately, the other thing that's not as great as it could be when it comes to her bf is a much less obvious fix.

It's not a thing at all, actually. He's more of a 'who.' And that 'who' is her twin brother, who seems to, maybe, have some sort of an issue with her boyfriend. Or something related to him. But she doesn't really know what that issue is... it's hard to tell it's even there, sometimes. Urk. It's so hard to fix a problem that you can't quite pinpoint. Or even figure out if it's actually a real problem at all. Which is kind of the essence of the problem?

It started off really subtle, way back at the beginning of her relationship, with the offhanded comments about how Aiden's hair was too pointy to be real, or the occasional look of disapproval when it came to anything 'Mabel's boyfriend.' She'd chalked it up to Dipper's natural protective brother instincts kicking in. Which, she could understand. He's always been wary of the guys she's been interested in over the years. It's just a thing he does. A protective brother thing. It's kinda sweet, actually.

Or at least, it *was* sweet. Now it's turned into something highly irksome. Plus, as the last two months have crept by, the evidence keeps stacking up that this isn't just an overprotective thing. It's something... else. Like Dipper has a problem with Aiden specifically.

The proof is in the eyerolls, or the looks, or in the unnecessarily harsh comments, all of which have been growing more and more frequent. Like for example, last week when she drove the three of them for a quick study-break-fast-food-run on a school night. She'd glanced in the rear view mirror to catch Dipper glaring at the back of Aiden's head from the backseat, his arms crossed huffily, when all Aiden was doing was faintly bopping along to the song playing on the radio. Just sitting there, glaring away like a turdfacedumbbutt! *Ugh*. Yeah. It's stuff like that. All totally unprovoked, for no real reason. It's gotten to the point where he looks vaguely bored or annoyed whenever Aiden opens his mouth to speak. Like, Dipper can be a condescending jerk sometimes, but it's never been *this* extreme. And especially not towards someone he knows his sister cares about.

By now she has a seriously nagging vibe that Dipper doesn't even like Aiden at all. Which not only makes her feel crummy and disappointed, but it also makes no sense, because Aiden is awesome! She's not just biased because she's his girlfriend, seriously, everybody loves Aiden. Even her parents love him! Mabel had him over for dinner the other night, and her mom and dad had bantered with him, asked him questions that he knocked out of the park, and pretty much wore big smiles of approval throughout. They clearly thought Aiden was a keeper. Dipper on the other hand barely said anything the entire meal, just spent the whole time halfheartedly pushing the spaghetti on his plate around with a fork.

She doesn't get it. Every time her brother and her boyfriend interact, Aiden is nothing but nice to Dipper. *What* is her bro's problem?

Maybe it's something else? Maybe *she's* the problem? Dipper's formerly mild complaints when she's having one of her inadvertent boyfriend gush-fests sorta *have* morphed into him pretty much snapping at her to give it a rest. And there's been some weird-ish stuff too. She keeps catching Dipper staring at her, and when she jokingly calls him out on it, he just grumbles and darts his eyes away, offering no real explanation. There've also been instances of him doing this weird stuttery thing around her (and she's pretty sure she's the cause since it's only happened when it's just the two of them), randomly stumbling over his words or weirdly pausing halfway through a sentence and then being an awkward dork about it. That's only happened a few times, but still. Since when was this a thing in the first place? Dipper has gotten tongue-tied and under-breath-whispery around tons of people, but never her. Their dynamic has always been natural and easy-going as pie, at least until these weird little instances.

And in really recent weeks, Mabel has noticed that he's taken to somehow finding a reason to leave the living room as soon as her and Aiden come in to hang out on the couch too. Or *any* room she comes into with Aiden at her side. And, just, it's *Aiden*, and she sorta can't get enough of that kid right now, so unfortunately she's been seeing less and less of her brother.

Maybe that's the problem? He thinks he's being traded up for the boyfriend and is expressing his anger through random acts of jerky weirdness?

That seems kind of overdramatic for Dipper. After all, it's not like she's been outright ditching him.

Although... she does have a clear memory of her brother getting mad at her that one time for backing out of their traditional mini-golf-madness night in favor of hanging out with Aiden and his friends. And there's that other time where she and Dipper made plans to drive to the edge of town together and check out this apparently once-in-a-lifetime comet through his prized complicated-looking telescope that he got for their fourteenth birthday—buuut that hadn't ended up happening, because Aiden had been bummed about something that afternoon, and she lost track of time sticking around his house to comfort him, and then she forgot to text Dipper, and... and there's that one other time where...

... Okay, so maybe she is a *little* of guilty of outright ditching out on the Dipster a few times in favor of some extra boyfriend-girlfriend time. But come on man, it's not a crime to want to spend time with your still-relatively-new and super-cute significant other, right? If their roles were reversed and it was Dipper and his girlfriend (although the steady girlfriend thing hasn't really happened for him yet) instead, she'd totally understand. So she doesn't get why her brother can't, sometimes.

There have also been some awkward points. Those might be worth mentioning, possibly problem-inducing. Mabel's an affectionate person, and Aiden's lips are always just right there for the taking, and sometimes she can't help herself. And maybe sometimes her brother unwittingly gets caught in the crossfire of these semi-public displays of affection around their house, or at school, or in the car, or anywhere, really, much to his obvious dismay. Maybe that's what he's mad about.



... *Blargh*, the worst was probably last week, when Dipper came home early from academic decathlon team practice and accidentally witnessed a few seconds of, uh, 'more-lively-than-usual boyfriend makeouts' on the living room couch. Boyfriend's hand up her magenta sweater included. Thaaat admittedly might'a been a little scarring for her poor bro-bro, evident in his cracky-voiced, "Oh, jeez, *why*," and how angry he'd seemed as he hurriedly stalked up the stairs, a hand shielding his face from the blasphemous scene. But, she'd made it a point to apologize later, and then he'd apologized for maybe, possibly, overreacting a little, and they'd ended up staying up super late together in his room watching funny internet videos and playing video games and feasting on copious amounts of delicious unhealthy snacks. It was the ultimate forgiveness ritual, so she thought they were past that! If it were Dipper and a girlfriend, she'd be understanding of the occasional PDA. She really would!

Whatever the reason for the kinda-sorta-problem, as time passes it's been causing Dipper to get quieter and quieter, and more and more M.I.A., and more and more of a roundabout jerk to her bf. But not so much that she can self-assuredly call him out on all of it outright. Not so much that she can know for sure that all these obscure happenings are totally, positively, one-hundred-percent connected.

The withdrawn, not-quite-being-himself and seeing less of him parts—yeah, they make her a little sad. Dipper's her twin, and he's also basically her unwritten best friend, and seeing him act like this is just plain disheartening. But—but with a giant, capital B—best bro or not, Mabel's gettin' reeeal tired of him acting like a royal poophead towards her dream boy. So much so that it's almost kind of drowning out the sad, concerned-sister feelings. Almost. Well, maybe just a little.

Urgg, he's being such a huge butt, though!

She can see it even right now, as she sits across from him at the kitchen table. Yeah. Yep, there it is. That minuscule, squinty-eyed 'wow this is stupid' look he just threw at the ceiling while Aiden tells a story about what happened at soccer practice today.

She's not going to call Dipper out on it though, for the same reason she never does. It would just embarrass him. And her. And probably Aiden too. The chill atmosphere of dinnertime would get all stuffy and awkward. The look might be nothing anyway, it's so hard to tell. Not worth it.

Mabel sets down her container of Lo Mein to take a sip of Pitt. It's take out night in the Pines household, which she especially makes a point to invite her boyfriend over for every week now, and this week Chinese was deemed the winner. At the moment, it's just her, Aiden and Dipper at the table. Dad's at an evening meeting with a client; Mom was originally eating with them, but she had to run out halfway through when she got a call from work, leaving the three teenagers to rule the house. Luckily her parents are chill enough to sometimes let Aiden stay over even if they're out. Psh, they trust her, they know she's not gonna do anything stupid... although the fact that Dipper's here too probably helps. Who would ever attempt sexy-type activities with their boyfriend while their brother was in the very near vicinity?

“—And yeah, now Mike’s pretty pissed, ugh, it’s so over the top. He might even cancel that party he was gonna have at his cousin’s empty apartment next Friday. Which, by the way, we were invited to,” Aiden adds, directing the last sentence towards Mabel.

She lifts her shoulders, quirking her mouth to one side. “Well that stinks about the whole Mike-Jesse-Damon dramarama, but it’s not like we were gonna go to that party anyway.”

“Oh, why not?”

“Uh, *duhh!* Next Friday is the spring dance, ya knucklehead! And I never pass up a chance to get my dancey pants on, so we are most definitely going to that.”

“We are? Because I don’t recall asking you yet,” Aiden jokes.

“Very funny. You’re a funny one. I’ll be expecting my grand invite soon, buster,” Mabel retorts, bopping her boyfriend on the nose and grinning. She turns her gaze across the table, where her brother has been diligently playing the role of silent background character as usual. “What about you, brodeski? You planning on askin’ any purty ladies to the dance?”

Dipper shakes his head, absentmindedly stabbing at the last few scraps of food on his plate. “Nnnope. No need, ‘cuz I’m not going.”

She blows a raspberry. “Aw, laaame. Come onnnn, brother, surely there must be *somebody* out there you wanna take out for a magical night of dancing and fun.”

“Not really. I suck at dancing.”

Her eyes roll. “Okay fine, just fun, then. And FYI Dip, you’re not as bad a dancer as you think—you just have a hard time finding your groove, y’know? If you just toned it down with that arm move you’re always doing, you’d be golden. Eh. Eh. You know the one.” Mabel proceeds to imitate said move, raising her fists to shoulder level and shimmying around, making an ‘undz undz undz’ beat through her teeth. Aiden laughs, while Dipper blushes and sinks down in his seat, complaining at her to knock it off. She has mercy on him, relenting with the dancing and continuing on with her point. “But seriously, you’re always skipping dances. You should try going this time, they’re so fun! And I can totally get you a date, if that’s what you’re worried about. I’m an expert matchmaker. You know this, I know this, we all know this.”

“I do know that,” Aiden says airily, putting down his fork to sling a toned arm across her shoulders. Mabel grins over at her boyfriend, placing a quick peck on his cheek—complete with a ‘*muah!*’—next putting a finger to her chin in thought.

“Hmm. Let’s see what we got to work with. Hmmm... would you be interested innnn... Ella Felton?”

Dipper is frowning faintly, staring at some unknown point between Mabel and Aiden. “Pass.”

“What’s wrong with Ella? She’s so sweet!”

"If by sweet you mean 'loud and obnoxious,' then I agree with you. Pass."

Mabel waves a hand in defeat. "Blah. Fine, fine, have it your way. Umm, um um um... ooh. Ooh! How 'bout Taylor Reinhard? She's cute, right? And I've seen you talking to her before. *And* I know for a fact she's single. *And* judging by her outfits she loves plaid flannel as much as you do." Mabel lets out a good natured chuckle, smiling warmly at her brother. She puts on a jokey accent. "And you're a catch, mah brotha! I bet she'd totally go with you, if you asked."

Before Dipper can utter another bland "Pass," Aiden speaks up, a friendly smile on his face. "Hey, I'm friends with Taylor, she sits next to me in English. I could talk to her for you, if you want. Get the ball rolling."

Dipper's eyes raise from his plate, looking thoroughly unimpressed. "Thanks, but I'm good." He stabs at a piece of sesame chicken, sighing. "Probably just gonna end up going over Sam's to play Xbox or something."

But Aiden doesn't give it up right away, clearly trying to break through Dipper's unyielding stone-face. "Really, it's not a problem. I could just—"

"—*Seriously*. Not necessary, I'm good." Dipper cuts him off, and the blonde boy deflates.

"You sure?"

"Yyyup." Dipper pops the piece of chicken in his mouth, chewing pointedly, and Mabel can no longer stop herself from intervening.

"Come on Dip, don't be such a grumpy weiner! You should totes let him talk to her for you, he's awesome at talking people up. Then you could ask her and we could all go together!" Mabel's eyes suddenly jump into excited mode. "Ahhh, it could be a twin double date! It's about time we had one of those! You'll have fun bro, trust me, I will make *sure* of it."

"Yeah dude, listen to your sister. Her word is good." Mabel, too distracted by the affectionate nudge-smile combo Aiden gives her as he says this, doesn't notice her brother's eyes narrow.

"Look, I don't need your help to get a date for some stupid dance, okay? I *said*, I'm good." Immediately the young couple knocks it off with the mild goo-goo eyes to turn and stare at Dipper with raised eyebrows, because there was more than a little bitterness in his tone, and woah, where did that come from? Dipper quickly drops any and all eye contact, already in the process of standing up from the table, opening his mouth to mumble sarcastically, "And I *think* I've figured out by now when it's a good idea to *'listen to my sister,'* but hey. *Thanks* for the advice anyway, man."

Hands shoved in his pockets, a spiteful hunch in his back, Dipper trudges out of the kitchen. Aiden waits until the clearly irritated boy has been gone for a few solid seconds before speaking, a confused expression on his face. "Uh... did I do something?"

Mabel shakes her head slowly, still glaring at the doorway Dipper disappeared through. "Nope. *That* was just my brother being a major wad of jerk for no flippin' reason, what the heck." She sighs, ceasing her glare-fest with the door, her shoulders slumping as she throws Aiden an apologetic look. "I'm sorry, he's not usually so... blarghhh."

He frowns uncertainly. "I dunno babe... sometimes I get the vibe that your brother like, *hates* me or something."

"Whaaat? That's crazy talk. Dip totes thinks you're the cheese!"

Her boyfriend raises an eyebrow, giving her a skeptical look. "*Mabel*. Come on."

She deflates quickly. "Okayyy, so maybe he *has* been acting a little funky to you lately, but that doesn't mean he *hates* you... and anyways. *I* think you're the cheese, and that's what counts, right?"

"Can't argue with you there." He grins, leans over to give her a quick kiss, leaving Mabel smiling and swooning when he backs away to keep talking. "But like, still, he's a big part of your life, you know? I mean, you've showed me enough of your scrapbooks for me to figure out that you guys' whole 'mystery twins' deal, or whatever, is kind of a pretty big thing—"

"We *are* a pretty iconic pair of siblin's," Mabel interjects with a proud smile.

"Totally iconic. Point is, he's important to you, I want him to like me."

"I know, I want him to like you too..." she says wistfully, more to herself than Aiden. She sighs, deciding to finally voice out loud what's been niggling away at her mind. "Ya know? It might not be a beef with just you. To be honest he's kinda been acting funky in general lately... I mean Dipper gets in funks all the time, but they've never involved him acting like a royal butthead to people for no reason. I'm not sure *what's* going on with him."

"Maybe you should talk to him? See what's up?"

Gnawing guilt bubbles up in Mabel's stomach the instant Aiden says the words. Of course she should talk to Dipper. Of course she's *going* to talk to Dipper—finally find out why he's acting out, see if there's anything she can do to help fix this problem, and set things straight. If there is a problem. But the fact that she had to have her boyfriend suggest the idea to her first is just... it makes her uneasy, and maybe a tiny bit ashamed. Because being there for her twin is the type of thing that's always been a reflex. Not a boyfriend suggestion.

"Yeah... yeah, I'll talk to him."

Aiden nods. "Cool."

They finish up the last of their dinners, and Aiden helps her do the dishes, complete with water flicking and nose kisses and sitcom worthy banter. Not long after that he receives the unavoidable 'come home' text from his mom, and the pair makes their way to the front

door, hand in hand. Easily wrapping her arms around his neck, the smitten teenage girl rises up on her tiptoes to give her boyfriend a thorough goodbye kiss—and then one more for the road. They wave goodbye, the front door shuts, and then the house is silent.

Automatically Mabel looks back toward the stairs, her jaw setting.

Alright, Mabel girl. Time to figure out what the heck is going on.

She ascends the steps, marching her way down the hall to rap furiously on Dipper's bedroom door. Not even bothering to wait for an invitation inside, Mabel barges right in to find Dipper lazily sprawled out on his bed, propped on his pillows with a book in his hands and a pen in his mouth—for scribbling his own notes and theories in the margins, no doubt. He doesn't react to her sudden presence at all, just turns a page and keeps reading. With an annoyed grumble, Mabel continues marching until she's standing right next to the bed, her hands on her hips. She clears her throat loudly.

"What's up." His tone is bored, and he doesn't even bother to look up, and this only serves to make Mabel that much angrier.

"Umm, I think you know very well what's up, brother." She huffs, folding her arms, giving him an incredulous look. "What was that back there? Aiden was only trying to help, and you totally snuffed him!"

"Hey, I told him I didn't want to go to that stupid dance. He kept pressin' on anyway. What do you want from me?"

Her cheeks puff up, pink with irritation, and she finally lets it fly all in one exasperated exhale. "Why do you have such a problem with Aiden!"

Dipper's shoulders stiffen, but the bored voice prevails. "I don't have a problem with Aiden." Mabel's eyes narrow at this completely lame response, one of her eyelids twitching, and then her hand swings around to lightly-but-also-not-super-gently cuff the side of her brother's head, knocking off his hat. Dipper recoils, finally tearing his eyes away from that dumb book of his to glare at her. "The hell was that for!"

"You got thwacked because you are quite obviously *lying*, Dipper! Liars get thwacked in this household!"

"I'm not lying!"

"There you go again! With the lies! Shameful. Such shame you're bringing upon this family!"

"Ughh Mabel, you're driving me crazy..." He puts down his book to direct an irritated groan up at the ceiling with his palms held up, fingers bent in a 'why me' pose; then lets his arms drop lifelessly, his head falling back and bumping lightly against his headboard. "It's *not*—I don't have a problem with your boyfriend okay? He's fine. He's a cool dude. Happy for you guys."

“Okay, well if he’s such a ‘cool dude’ then why do you keep writing off everything he says, and acting all quiet and annoyed whenever he’s around, and glaring at the back of his head?” Mabel points an accusatory finger down at her brother. “Yeah, I saw you in the car the other night, Dipper. You can’t tell me to my face that that wasn’t a straight up back-of-the-head glare.”

Her specific example throws off Dipper’s game, his face going blank. His mouth opens and closes, but he says nothing. Mabel rolls her eyes for what feels like the hundredth time that day. “Just spit it out already. Do you hate him or something?”

His head gives a single, slight shake, and he picks his book back up. “No, I don’t hate him.”

Mabel’s hands move back to her hips, her eyebrows raising expectantly. “Well then what is it?”

“What’s what?”

“I *mean*, what’s been going on with you, Dipper? Clearly something is making you feel not-so-great and you’re taking it out on Aiden—”

Dipper scowls. “Oh please, how would you even know what I’m feeling? I barely see you anymore since you guys started going out!”

“And whose fault is that? You’re the one who’s always being all avoid-y and leaving the room and junk!”

“Well *excuse* me for not wanting to stick around to watch my sister and her boyfriend mack on each other *twenty-four-seven!*”

She waves him off, scoffing. “Pshh, you’re exaggerating. Besides, it’s not like Aiden is *always* over here.”

Dipper snorts. “Yeah, except, he is.”

“He is not!” Mabel spouts off defensively.

“Oh come on, Mabel. You and I both know that the vast, *vast* majority of the time, either he’s here, or you’re not. End of story.”

“Wh—that’s not true,” she says hesitantly, her conviction having quickly dropped off into the land of uncertainty.

“*Sure*, okay. Fine. It’s not true. Whatever you say, Mabel.” Dipper’s voice drips with biting sarcasm, making her eyebrows furrow, but then he adds something that feels a little like a hard poke to the chest. “Now can you please get out of my room?”

Mabel’s face wilts. “Dipper, you’re being really mean,” she says, her voice dropping to sad quiet levels.

Her dejected puppy eyes must've gotten to him, because the hard look on his face eases right up. "... Sorry. I'm not trying to be mean, I'm just... frustrated."

"How come?"

He has to set his open book down on his thigh so he can throw his hands up, as if the answer should be obvious to her. "Because! I miss you, okay? I feel like I never see you anymore, and when I do, you're with Aiden. And I miss hanging out with you. When it's just me and you. Bam. There you go. It's out there. Go nuts." He swiftly picks the book back up and buries his nose in it, holding it up higher so he can avoid her eyes.

... Okay, yeah, and now she feels kinda bad and guilty. Mabel just stands there silently for a bit before carefully moving to sit down on the edge of his bed, her heart feeling heavy. "Aw man... I'm sorry, Dip. I didn't even realize..."

"Don't worry about it. It's whatever." He turns a page.

Mabel looks down at the floor, distractedly kicking at the junk on his carpet. "... If you missed me, why didn't you just say something? I would've made the effort to get more twin time in."

Her brother heaves a desolate sigh, finally closing the book and putting it aside so he can scooch over and drop his feet off the bed, slouching next to her. "Because, Mabel, they'd be pity hangouts. Like I know you're not intentionally snuffing me or anything... you're just hanging out with who you wanna hang out with. And, and that's fine, I don't wanna hold you back from that, I just... ugh, y'know. It's whatever."

Mabel frowns, nudging him with an elbow until he looks at her. "Would'ja quit making it sound like I don't love spending time with you? That's just a blasphemous concept in itself, bro." She turns her gaze down to her hands, starting to braid and unbraided her fingers. "... I guess I *might've* gotten carried away with the whole boyfriend thing. Sorta. Probably. It's just. He's my first one, y'know? And I'm all lame and twitterpated and junk. "

"Yeah..." Dipper's slouch gets a little bit slouchier. "... Yeah."

Determined to fix that forlorn edge in her twin's voice, Mabel scoots closer to him, wrapping an arm around his back and laying her head on his shoulder. She feels him tense up for a second before he relaxes into her hold. With her free hand she begins to gently poke his cheek. "Hey, hey you. Just because I have a boyfriend now, doesn't mean I care about you any less, you big dork. Duhhh. Ain't nobody ever replacing you, Dip. You're one of a kind. Definitely the best brother I could ever ask for, hands down."

He quirks a smile at that, nodding slowly to himself. "Thanks, Mabel."

She stops poking him, letting her hand flop down into her lap. "And I promise to let up a little with the boyfriend gushiness, okay? As long as *you* promise to tell me what you're feeling from now on, rather than turning into a giant buttface. Oh, and we are totes for sure gonna hang out more. And if you dare call them pity hang outs I will punch you in the head."

"Cool. And noted." He nods with a small laugh, sounding both pleased and sheepish as he lays his head on top of hers. It goes quiet again, the twins sitting comfortably together, before Mabel realizes she has more to say.

"... We're just... we're growing up, y'know? And part of that means boyfriends and girlfriends are gonna be coming on the scene... or are already on the scene, you get me. And maybe we're gonna be spending a little less time together, but..." She purses her lips, giving Dipper a one armed squeeze, kindheartedly shaking him back and forth. "But hey. No matter how any those relationships turn out for either of us, *dahh-nah-nah-nah-can't-touch-this*," she gestures a finger between the two of them. "It's pretty awesome to know we'll always have each other, no matter what. Twin power for life, bro."

"Yeah, it is..." Dipper sighs again. Mabel expects him to say something corny and wise and accepting next, so she's a little taken aback when he only mumbles sadly, "It's just... it's not the same."

She blinks a couple times, her eyebrows raising a little. Weird. This is like some sort of odd role reversal. Usually she's the one who gets whiny and quiet and sad-nostalgic about changes that just sorta come with them getting older, not Dipper. This is really... *strange*, for him.

She lifts her head off his shoulder, pulling away to look her brother in the eye, searching for... something. He frowns, shrinking back under her stare.

"What."

"You're not telling me everything," Mabel says suddenly.

Indeed, her suspicions are confirmed in the way her brother seems to blanch at the statement, his eyes immediately becoming shifty. "Huh? Yeah I am."

She shakes her head, resolute in her intuition. "Nope. Your eyebrow just did that anxious twitchy thing. Give it up Dip, I know all your tells. I'm a master at reading Dipper tells. What else is bothering you?"

"There's nothing else."

"Ha! There it goes again! Twitch! Twitch twitch twitch!"

"Mabel, knock it off!"

"Twitchy twitchyyy..." Mabel grins at him, but he's really not having it right now, so she lets the teasing smile drop, shooting him a semi-annoyed look. "Dipper. I'm just trying to help. Is it another thing about me and Aiden?"

"No—I mean, it's nothing—dammit." Dipper closes his eyes with a grimace, knowing he just gave himself away.

"Is it something about me? What's buggin' ya, son?"

"Just let it go, Mabel," he mutters in a warning tone.

She blows a huge raspberry. "No, I'm not just gonna," she drops the pitch of her voice to do her best Dipper impression, "*let it go, Mabel.*" If there's another reason you've been acting so weird lately I think I deserve know about it, so spill those beans. Spill 'em."

He's subtly shying away from her on the bed, a bit of color rising in his cheeks. "Look, this isn't—it's something I need to work through on my own, okay? It's—it's personal. So can we drop it please?"

Mabel quirks an incredulous smile despite herself. "'It's *personal*?' Like... a *dude* problem, or something? Or..." she lowers her voice to a loud whisper, "is it a butt rash?"

"Oh my god. I'm not answering that."

She lays a hand on his shoulder and laughs good naturedly. "I'm just playin', man. C'mon, why won't you just let me help you? I'm great at sisterly advice."

"Because!" Dipper sputters. "Because—"

"Becaussse..."

His shoulder grows stiffer and stiffer under her hand, causing Mabel's eyebrows to raise. His face looks almost... pained? What? "Because. I just—I can't—tell you."

"Uhhhm why not?"

He shakes his head, tight-lipped, shrugging off her hand. "I just can't, okay? Just—trust me. You wouldn't wanna know."

"Bro. Come on. Whatever it is, I'm sure it's not that bad. Remember that time you put a dent in dad's car? Or when I walked in on you rockin' out to Cher in the bathroom? Did I, your loyal twin, ever rat you out or judge you? No, is the answer. I had your back. And I will have it again."

"... This isn't anything like that," he mumbles, staring intently at his knees.

And now she's 500% more curious. She pats his back a few times. "That's okay, tell me anyway."

"I'm not gonna do that. Give it a rest."

"Please?"

"No."

"Pleeeeeease?"

"Mabel, *stop*. I'm serious."

"Tell me or I'll fart on you. Don't think I won't. And I *know* you know I took Mom's leftover chili for lunch today, so, yeah. You do the math."

"Ugh, you're so gross—"

She starts nudging a fist into his side. "Gross and looking for answers! And I'm not gonna stop 'til I get 'em, so just quit being lame and tell me already, tell me tell me tell me *tell me*—"

Suddenly Dipper leaps to his feet, his hands balled up into fists, taking her a little by surprise. "Okay, fine! You really wanna know?"

"Uh, yeah, I do!"

"Well then ya *can't blame me* when you hate me forever after I tell you!" he yells, starting to do that frantic pacing thing he does.

Woah. Well that escalated... "Ah, quit being such a drama king, Dipper. There's nothing that could make me hate you forever."

"Ho ho, you wanna bet?"

"Pfff, sure! I'll take that bet. But it's a dumb pointless bet because I promise you Dipper, there is literally *nothing* that could ever make me hate you, ever. Now tell me what's really been bothering you!"

Dipper seems to reach some sort of breaking point, his expression dangerously close to crazy-eyed status, and he abruptly stops pacing, spinning to face her.

"*Fine!* Have it your way! The reason I've been acting so fucking weird lately is because I'm—I—" He sputters. He actually pulls at his hair, then drags his hands down the length of his face. "*Just*—nevermind. Forget it. Please Mabel, please, just forget it. Please."

He just stands there hanging his head, bringing a listless hand back up to hide his flushed face. This isn't going the way she thought it would when she first started pestering him. Not at all.

"Dipper?" Mabel asks worriedly. She gets to her feet, cautiously edging her way over to his spot across the room. "Hey, I'm here. Talk to me, bro."

"I just—it's just..." All the bite has left his voice. He lets his hand drop, reluctantly glancing up at her.

Mabel's stomach drops. His face looks scared, and uncertain, and so so *sad*, and—wait, woah, holy crap, *what* is going on with him? What did she miss? It's obviously tearing him up inside. She knows what Dipper's torn up face looks like, and that's definitely his torn up face. Her voice softens, the last tiny bit of her aggravation evaporating away. "Dip, what is it? What's wrong? Please, tell me."

For a few seconds he says nothing. "I... I *want* to, Mabels," Dipper finally croaks out. "Fuck, I want to, but I just... can't."

The end of his sentence sounded so frighteningly broken that Mabel reflexively reaches out for her brother, starting forward with every intention of pulling him into a long, comforting hug—but he rashly dodges out of her reach, holding up his hands at her.

“Please don’t, not right now.” It almost sounds like he’s begging her. Instantly Mabel’s eyes begin to water, and owie, yeah, that’s definitely a stabbing sensation in her chest, there.

“Dipper,” she sniffs, blinking rapidly.

“I’m sorry, it’s not you, I’m just. . .” His eyes squeeze shut tightly and then he grimaces, shaking his head to himself. “*Goddammit*, I’m so *tired* of—*ugh* this is so fucking *stupid*—”

Her teary brown eyes grow wide. Woah. Something is clearly, like. . . *killing* him. And she didn’t even know about it until just now? Oh gosh oh gosh, poor Dipper, he was totally right about her shunting him off to the side of her life the last couple months, oh man, ugh, she’s a terrible sister!

“Hey, seriously, you can tell me, Dip,” Mabel coaxes, aiming to sound as reassuring as possible, not wanting to scare him off, but also determined to help him. “I promise you can tell me. Like does this look like a judgin’ face to you? Whatever it is, I’ll help you. We’ll fix this together, okay? Mystery twins style. It’ll be okay, bro.”

But Dipper only shuts his eyes and shakes his head vigorously through her comfort speech, gripping a fistful of his curly bangs against his forehead. “*No*, it won’t.”

“How can you know that unless you—”

“—You don’t get it, Mabel! *Nothing* about this is fucking okay!”

She can’t remember the last time he raised his voice at her like that. Mabel wrings her hands, her voice thick. “Dipper, you’re really freaking me out here, can you please just tell me what’s wrong? Let me help you, please. Please?”

At first he doesn’t respond at all, still clearly caught up in some raging inner battle with himself that she can’t see or hear. But finally, Dipper opens his eyes, letting out a miserable, frustrated exhale; all of a sudden it occurs to her how *exhausted* he looks. He stares exclusively at his ratty old sneakers, beginning to mutter in a low tone, so quiet it’s hard to even hear him. “I. . . ugh, please don’t hate me. . . but I think I. Um. I. . . shit, this is insane, I-I can’t say this to your face.”

“It’s okay, Dipper,” she soothes, trying to hide how much he’s scaring her, wondering what the heck he meant by that. Wanting more than anything to bound forward and wrap him up a big ol’ panda bear hug, but afraid he’ll reject her again, she stays where she is. “Take your time, I’m not goin’ anywhere.”

“Like I don’t even know. . . how this happened? But—like I might—be sort of uh. . . this is so fucked *up*, I don’t know why I’m telling you this, what the fuck, man—”

It's honestly like a train wreck she can't look away from. He's just stuttering, looking like he's on the verge of hyperventilating, stuttering and then harshly berating himself and then stuttering again. It's like he's actually physically incapable of getting out the words.

"—Okay! Okay. Fuck it. Look, this is completely crazy and me telling you this is probably like the dumbest thing I'll ever do, and you're probably going to hate me for it, but I don't think I can..." He shakes his head, that crumbled, near broken expression creeping back onto his face. "I can't... not tell you anymore. So uh. Here goes. So, lately I've been—u-um—" He's blushing. A *lot*. Mabel raises an eyebrow, beyond confused at this point. She's starting to feel like a total dumbbell for still being completely in the dark about the nature of the truth bomb he's attempting to drop. Dipper swallows hard, takes a deep breath, and starts over. "Mabel, I've sort of been wanting to tell you for a while that I... I think I'm... uh..." His hand balls up into a fist, tapping against his thigh as he tries to force himself to just be done with this tortuous train wreck already. It taps and taps and taps, but... nothing. He seems to have hit an internal word limit. Nothing's coming out.

Dipper exhales despondently, hanging his head in defeat.

"...You think you're what?" Mabel asks, glancing off to the side and back at him. She didn't mean for her voice to come out quite that softly.

He doesn't answer. But Mabel nearly has to take a step back when he eventually lifts his eyes to hers, his expression completely serious, his jaw set, something burning hard and wild and alive in his stare. Jeez. It feels like it's about to bore right through her. She feels a tiny jolt in her chest, her world thrown just an inch or two off balance. Mabel racks her brain, trying to figure out *why* she's having such a drastic reaction to only a look, before the lightbulb moment hits.

It's because she's never seen it. She doesn't even recognize it. It's coming from the guy who's given her a bazillion different kinds of looks over the course of their lives, good and bad and everything in between, but never this one.

Mabel swallows, wanting to break her eyes away, but for whatever reason can't bring herself to do it. And Dipper just keeps right on starin'.

Nope, he's definitely never looked at her like *this* before.

"...Dip? What's the deal, bro?"

Once again, no answer. Instead he starts shuffling over to her, his face a strange mix of anxiety and resigned determination, until he's close enough that Mabel is forced to look up slightly to properly see his face, even though he's only a couple inches taller. Uhh, is there some supernatural force at work here that she's not aware of? When did the vibes in this room get so heavy?

He bites his bottom lip, taking one last tiny half-step forward. And yep. It's official. He's definitely all up inside her personal bubble right now. Er. Usually she's the personal-bubble-invading twin, not Dipper. Dipper's the one who jokingly complains and pushes her

away after indulging her a little. But when Mabel *does* go in to grab him up in a hearty sister-squeeze, she certainly doesn't do it like *this*—all silent and with all this eye contact and loaded silence n' stuff. Mabel's heartbeat speeds up significantly, warmth creeping into her face, because it hits her that this doesn't feel like it's leading to a good ol' sibling hug. Or, dare she say it, any sort of hug at all.

Jeez. Uh. She should probably say something, since it doesn't look like he's going to be the one to do it and things are gettin' a *little* weird here... but the inwardly floundering girl can't seem to find her voice.

Suddenly everything starts moving in super fast motion, way, way too fast for her tastes—Dipper's face moves in closer and closer and she can see his eyes closing and then his nose brushes hers, and huh, she's never really noticed how dang long his eyelashes are before right this second, and—*wait* wait wait, he's not actually about to do what it absolutely looks like he's about to do, is he? He wouldn't. He wouldn't! Psh, that'd just be flat out craycray *ca-rayy-zayy* with a capital—

... Oh.

But then he does.

It's super hesitant at first. Not much more than a tiny brush of lips. But it's still enough to make Mabel's heart leap into her throat and stick there. She's so stunned that it doesn't even occur to her to nip this madness in the bud and lurch away; nope, she can only stand there with her eyes wide open, arms limp at her sides, while her brother kisses her.

Dipper seems to take the fact that she hasn't run away screaming yet as a roundabout sign of encouragement, or a boost of morale, or something, because suddenly his lips grow bold and pressing, fitting themselves much more snugly onto hers, his head tilting. There's a faint prickling sensation on her chin from the peach fuzz on his. One of his hands reaches out to take up hers in a shy grip, and his is crazy sweaty and—okay yup, yeah, this just plain *strange*, where the heck did this come from, w-what is going *on*...?

The seconds tick-tick-tick on by, aaand it's still happening. Mabel is starting to seriously wonder *why* it's still happening, why she *hasn't* run away screaming yet, because the weirdness has breached maximum code-red-alert levels (which is saying something, since due to things like dating gnomes stacked on top of other gnomes and fighting 3-sided dream demons, her personal weirdness meter extends much further than your average 17-year-old girl's).

Maybe it's because, apart from being, y'know, *majorly* weirded out and baffled, her brain is just a *teensy* bit curious? It's just—well, usually by this point in a kiss she's used to having a pushy tongue already having wriggled its way in her mouth. After all, that's what pretty much all of the boys she's kissed over the years did (or more like *do*, since Aiden is admittedly included in this group most of the time), and it's not like she ever *mind*ed, but... Dipper doesn't do any of that. She just... she can't help but notice. There's no pushiness, no slobber, no slightly awkward or overbearing moves that pull her out of the moment.

Rather, Dip's technique is more sorta—maybe natural, is the right word for it? Yeah. Natural. Like... the way kisses are maybe supposed to feel, and she just never knew any better before. His mouth moves slowly and sweetly, soft little kissing noises tickling her ears as his lips part a little, then pucker, then part a little again against hers, warm and surprisingly smooth and... and uh... this is... not... terrible?

It's sorta really not terrible, actually?

Um...



Before Mabel can put too much thought into it, she may or may not be allowing her eyes to flutter shut, the distraught tension in her joints and limbs loosening. Her lips might not be *totally* lifeless against Dipper's anymore... they might even move a little, returning some of the gentle pressure. And underneath all the churning shock, something that feels suspiciously like butterflies begin to stir up in her tummy.

Yeah, thaaat's uh... that's definitely a butterfly or two flappin' around in there...

... Wait, *what?!*

Mabel's eyes fly open, her dazed reciprocation dropping off as she's abruptly T-boned by a speeding truckload of reality.

Umm, hello in there?! Attention all Mabel brain personnel, like a million seconds have passed and *your brother is still kissing you!* And was she really just kissing him *back?* Ugh! What the holy heck is she doing! What is *he* doing! What is anyone doing anymore!

Right before a total freak out ensues, (*the one that should've happened as soon as this whole twin-brother-kissin'-you debacle started, Mabel!*) Dipper lets their lips gradually part with a quiet smacking noise that resonates unnervingly loud in her ears. He backs away, far enough to give her room to breathe, but doesn't let go of her hand. His dark brown eyes flit searchingly back and forth between hers, but Mabel's eyes are glazed over, far away, her mind fallen right back into *woah there* mode.

Uhhh, Dipper just kissed her. Dipper just kissed her? Dipper just kissed her. Her and Dipper just kissed. Okay then. Wait, not okay then, that was just—*malfunction, malfunction, Mabel central processing command center doesss not compute—!*

She can only stare vacantly at him, a little out of breath, her cheeks flushed, her head spinning. Alright. Okay! Now then. Next comes the part where Dipper starts laughing and tells her he was only kidding. That this was just a jerky prank (much, much jerkier and weirder than she's used to from him, no matter how much of a jerk he's been lately) to get her back for calling him out on everything. Dipper always has been pretty horrible at pranking. Yep. Now's that time.

Come on. Aaany minute now, Dip.

Mabel waits, and waits, and *waits* for him to do this, or anything like it. But he doesn't. And he's still so *close* to her. And his eyes are still half-lidded. And he's still got that... look in them. Oh dear. Ohh man.

Her eyes leave his to blankly drop down to his lips. The weirdly soft ones that were all up on hers only moments ago. She feels a little. Woozy. Her poor, bewildered brain experiencing severe technical difficulties. She really can't process what just happened. And on top of all that, her stupid, dumb heart is doing this skippy, fluttery thing that's got her alllll off kilter, and *thaaat* is just alarming.

She's been staring at his mouth for way too long. Crud. Dipper must have noticed. She hears him whisper, "*Mabes*," at the same time feeling him maneuver their joined hands around so he can tentatively inch his fingers between hers. The combination has a bit of a needle-full-of-adrenaline-to-the-chest effect on her, and Mabel finally wakes up from her little stupor, her eyes snapping back up just in time to catch Dipper's eyelids fall the rest of the way closed, his head tilting. . . holy dang cheese louise, this kid is leaning in again, and fast. *Wha*—he's going to kiss her *again*? So does this mean that first one officially *wasn't* just a really bizarre and not-actually-that-funny-at-all joke?

Uhhhm—!

Just before their lips can connect a second time, Mabel's head jerks backwards, her lips tightly pursed, the palm of the hand he's not holding darting up to lightly push back on his chest. She hurriedly squeaks out the words, tiny and fumbling, "Um, no no, canwemaybenot, um—"



Oh god. It's hard for her not to cringe deeply at the soul-crushing levels of awkwardness that ensue. Dipper's reaction is instant, his eyes springing back open, his eyebrows shooting up as high as they'll go. He's still mid-lean, awkwardly hovering close to her face, as what could only be described as a look of pure, terrified mortification dawns on his face. The pause lasts only two or three seconds before he drops her hand like he's just been burned and stumbles a few hasty steps backwards, his hands stuffing themselves into the pocket of his hoodie. Mabel stays put, watching him with wide eyes.

A numbing silence settles over the room, both twins stuck standing where they are, frozen. Mabel can't help but stare at her brother with a confused frown, her heartbeat still through the roof, her skin prickling with a slight case of the heebie-jeebies. Across from her Dipper just looks shaken, his eyes glued to the floor. Both of their faces are on fire, totally scarlet.

"U-um—" Mabel breaks the silence, her voice catching on that very first syllable. She gulps in an attempt to relieve her dry mouth, then tries again, speaking slowly. "... Uhh, *whaa*... um, are y—are youuu...?"

Suddenly she's shaking her head, shuddering to herself a little, causing Dipper to flinch where he stands. "Wait, am I missing something or? What the heck was that?" Mabel very nearly tacks on a 'bro' to the end of her question, but the simple nickname that usually rolls off her tongue so naturally gets caught in her throat and swallowed back down. A horribly awkward was-supposed-to-be-a-laugh sound comes bubbling out of her mouth instead.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I—" Dipper squints at a spot somewhere off to her right, shrugging exaggeratedly. "Shit, haha, no. I was just—it didn't mean anything or anything. It's not like—I've just been really, uh—you know." He abruptly runs out of words to trip over, looking like a scared, cornered animal that's trying wayyy too hard to be casual.

"Ooh-keydoke, not sure that I do, but, uh—sooo..." Mabel is fumbling hard, too. She's not equipped to handle this, whatever *this* is. It just doesn't make any sense. The fact that Dipper kissed her, and then tried to kiss her again, is starting to *really* sink in now, and it makes zero sense, so she's blanking hard on what questions to ask him. "... Sorry, blaghh, I'm just, a *lillll*' bit confused right now, can ya help me out here, or...?"

"Didn't mean anything, I swear," Dipper repeats weakly, his eyes growing more and more desperate.

"Alright, I hear ya, I guess, but... I guess I'm just wondering like... whyyy? Even? In the first place? You know?" She gestures her hands around helplessly, letting out more of those weird, high pitched, not-really-laughs. Because seriously. Why did this happen? You only kiss people you *like*. Which doesn't make sense, because Dipper couldn't possibly *like* her... she's his sister. People don't get crushes on their sisters.

It had to have been a joke. Please let it be a joke.

But she's never seen his face so red, before. And she can see the way he's wilting under her stare, sweating, looking like he wants to disappear into the floor, and... as genuinely freaked out as she is, Mabel's heart goes out to him. Her face falls as Dipper starts to frantically spew more word vomit.

"I seriously, I don't even know, Mabel, ugh, I've just been feeling so fucking out of it lately and I haven't been sleeping well and honestly, it wasn't even actually like... it's not like it was because it was *you*, it was just that—pff I don't know. It was dumb, it was so dumb and I really, seriously didn't mean it the way you're thinking s-so, yeah, could we maybe just—"

He's trying so hard to backtrack, but... these are all lame excuses. And Mabel isn't stupid. People don't kiss their siblings like that because they're sleep deprived. The dots are finally connecting themselves, as much as she's trying to fight it.

Dang.

Dang.

Yeah. Unfortunately she's got all the pieces she needs to solve this unforeseen puzzle. The kiss. The stammering, the nervousness, the weird staring, the words he could never quite get out. The reason why he's been acting so weird and distant... the cause for his irrational dislike of her boyfriend.

Mabel, I've sort of been wanting to tell you for a while that—

... Oh man. Oh no.

Mabel's heart whirs faster and faster, her face hotter than ever. Her whole body feels like it's clamming up.

This is easy math, even for her. Adding it all up is just a formality. But... but maybe she doesn't want to add it up. Because the answer is just... jeez. Insane. Dipper wasn't kidding around earlier. This is insane. Suddenly she's regretting ever asking him 'why.' She doesn't want to know why. Or at least she doesn't want to hear him *say* it. That would make it too real. It's not too late to pretend it never happened, right? If she never *officially* adds it all up, never acknowledges it outright in her head, maybe it doesn't have to be real?

"I'm sorry, Mabel." Dipper's meek voice breaks yet another awkward silence. "I shouldn't've... I don't know why I did that. And I'm sorry, okay? So can we please just file this under things we never speak of again and—and move on?"

This is big. This is huge. This isn't something you just ignore and move on from, just like that... he can't just do this to her and then expect to... yeah. They have to talk this out. They can't just leave it like this. No matter what's, um, *going on* with him, Dipper is still her brother, and she cares about him, and he's clearly over there drowning in shame and dread and all kinds of negative stuff, so she should probably say something at least a little bit reassuring.

But the crippling fear gets to her first, overriding her sisterly instincts. So instead Mabel shrugs, averts her eyes. "Okay," comes her short response.

Dipper blinks slowly a few times, as if he was expecting her to say something more than that. Then he shakes his head, in that signature frowny, closed-eyed way of his. "Okay... awesome. Great. Um." He's only frozen there for another couple seconds before he starts to turn this way and that, searching for something in the most discombobulated and awkward way possible, avoiding Mabel's eyes at all costs. He finally manages to find what he's looking for on his bed—his hat, which was right in front of his face the whole time—and swipes it up, jamming it down on his head, tugging the brim low over his eyes.

Mabel recognizes the habit. It's something Dipper does when he's embarrassed. When he's trying to hide. When he wants to be anywhere but where he is. There's another cruel poking sensation in her heart. But she stays quiet, staring down at the floor.

She dares one last guilty peek back up. Dipper is already backing his way towards the door, gesturing around with flustered motions. "Okay. Well I'm just gonna. Yup. Sorry," he mutters one last rushed apology, his cheeks looking like they're gonna melt right off his face, then fast walks right out of his own room.

Mabel still can't move. She stands there at the scene of the crime, staring at some point in space with a whirring heart that never seems to slow down. The sound of the front door opening and closing downstairs reaches her ears. Dazedly, she reaches up to touch her lips.

It hits her all over again. How her own brother kissed her. Inched his fingers between hers. Whispered her name in that deep, soft voice, and looked at her like... like he...

—*Nnnnope, no, bad brain, we're not thinking it out loud. Ever!*

Holy friggin dang. Holy crud McMuffins. Jesus Mary McJoseph—face—*whatever*, who cares, Dipper *kissed* her! In a boyfriend-girlfriendy way. Like a *guy* would kiss a girl. Dipper's always been her loyal, semi-neurotic nerdy twin sibling, who also happened to be a dude. He's never fallen under the category of *guy*; Mabel has never, ever thought of him like that before. She's never even *thought* about thinking of him like that before, like ew, why *would* she? But—but now he's recklessly gone and thrown himself into *guy* standing, and *yeesh* that's weird, weird, weird to be suddenly recognizing Dipper in *that* way after a lifetime of knowing him, and she doesn't even *want* to be doing it, but she can't help it, and that's infuriating and terrifying and so *bizarre* and... *and*...

She can't get over this. Will she ever get over this?

So many 'oh god why' thoughts invade her brain, freaking Mabel right the heck out all over again. Her brother kissed her, and she wasn't totally grossed out (*oh god, why*). She could've pushed him away at any time, but didn't (*oh god, whyyy!*). She *let* that kiss happen, the whole thing from beginning to end, all ten (twenty?!) long seconds of it. She might've even, maybe, possibly... sort of liked it just a *teeny* tiny eeny bit—

Her skin prickles and she squeaks aloud, burying her burning face in her hands.

No wait, wait, *dangit*, she didn't just think that! She didn't she didn't she *didn't!* There's no official record of that thought, world, you can't prove anything!

A piece of hair finding its way into her mouth, Mabel flees at last, sprinting on her toes out of Dipper's room, down the hall, and into hers. She doesn't mean to slam her door so hard, but she's a little frazzled at the moment. Clothes fly out of her closet as she seeks out her biggest, comfiest sweater, the red one with cheesy nachos printed all over it. Upon finding it she yanks it over her head, frantically seeking out its comfort, then bounds into her bed, grabbing her pig blanket on the way and wrapping it around herself like a cape. She crawls into the corner where her bed meets the wall, shimmying back into her arsenal of pillows and stuffed animals until she's almost buried, the fluffy toys providing a solid wall of protection. It's only then that she disappears into sweatertown. Deep, deep into sweatertown.

Ugh. Mabel tries to think of something else, anything else other than what just happened. But she can't. It's impossible! She keeps replaying the whole thing, over and over and over, the fight, their talk, his freak out, the kiss, the deathly awkward aftermath, all of it. *Dang it*, Dipper, what the heck! How could he do this to her! To their relationship! What was he thinking? Her eyes grow moist. This is so messed up. And *why*, why why why did she even let that first kiss happen? Why did she have to push him so hard, until he cracked? He would never have done it if she would've just dropped the subject like, the eleventeenth time he begged her to drop it! Idiot, pushy Mabel, why can't she ever just leave well enough alone? Then they wouldn't be in this mess!

A little voice in her head starts to pester her, jabbing away at her brain. Even if she hadn't pushed him, even if none of this had ever happened... the problem would still be there. Festering under the surface. Dipper would still... he would still have... *fe—*

Nope not thinking it aloud! Lalala caaaan't hear you!

In a last ditch effort to quell her racing thoughts, Mabel's head pops out of the turtle-neck of her sweater and she digs amongst her stuffed animals until she finds what she's looking for—a small white bear with a stuffed red heart stitched into its grip. A Valentine's gift from Aiden, back when they first started going out. She'd been so happy and excited when he gave it to her. Swiftly bringing the bear back with her through a stretched-out sleeve, Mabel dives back into her sweater cocoon, hugging the heart bear to her chest once she's curled up inside.

Aiden. She has to think of Aiden. Remember Aiden! Her boyfriend. Her anchor to normalcy. To a world of super-hunky dirty-blond soccer-playing normalcy, rather than a scary upside-down world where her twin brother has some sort of weird *thing* for her—

Her cheeks return to their former red hot state.

Aw, crap.

Way to go, champ! Ya thought it out loud!

... *Ugh!*

Closing her eyes tightly, she holds the bear closer, rocking back and forth in place just a smidgeon. Nonono, Mabel. Shhh. No more thoughts about... *that*. Thinking of Aiden now, here. Her adorable boyfriend, who likes her a whole lot. Who she's gonna pass cute notes with in math tomorrow. Who said he's gonna take her out on a date Friday to a secret surprise location. And they're gonna go to prom together, be the cutest couple there. And one day they'll get married and it'll be awesome. Mrs. Mabel Zimmerman, remember?

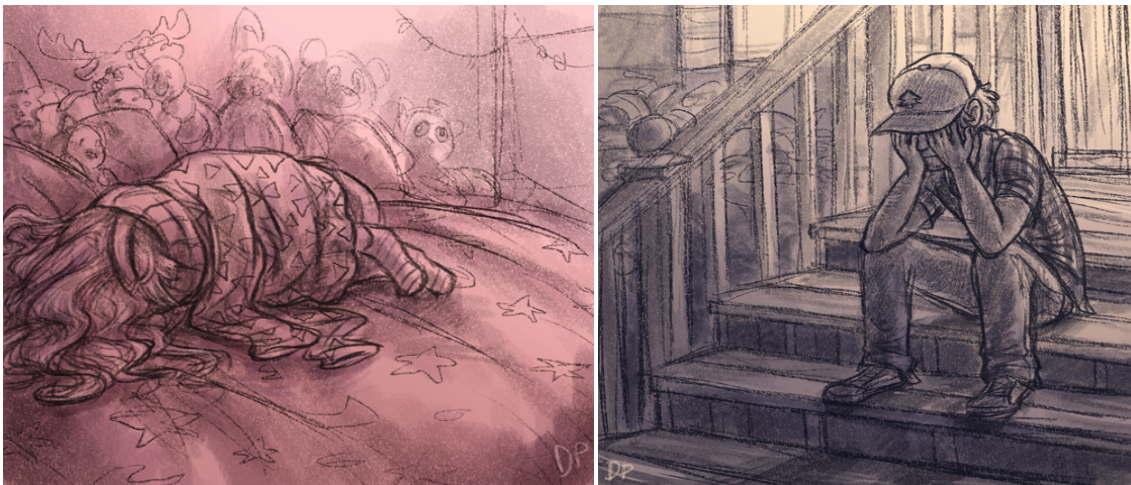
Mabel's lips set into a tight line.

No. This isn't going to change her original plan. She's not going to let it. She can still have her dream boy. Just because her brother had to go and... and *plant* one on her, doesn't mean she can't still have her dream boy. She *can*. This is just a... bump in the road. A test. A cruel test of fate to test her love. And her sanity. She can totally get through this. Come out on the other side with sanity and dream boy in tact.

... And what about Dipper, huh? The guy who's stuck by your side your entire life? Where does he fit into this whole 'happy ending' ya got there?

Her face crumbles. And then, as if she didn't already feel bad enough, the memory of soft lips pressed sweetly against hers chooses that very moment to replay in her brain theater, in vivid high definition. A wail emits from the rocking sweater lump, and it slumps on its side in a ball, defeated.

It's there that Mabel stays, wallowing in fear and uncertainty until she manages to fall into a dreamless sleep, finally freed from those gnawing, stomach-turning thoughts about boyfriends, brothers and the like... for a little while, at least.



by Double Pines

S'gonna be a long night

The door to Dipper's bedroom is much, much squeakier than Mabel remembers it ever being as she edges through it later that night. She can see her brother's head jerk in her direction from where he's lying on his back under the covers, arms crossed behind his head; she had a strong feeling he'd still be awake. Meanwhile in her head there's a giant choir of tiny Mabels that bombard her with the same question over and over (*Uhm, what the heck d'ya think you're doing right now, Mabel?!).* They ask her frantically, ceaselessly, like she actually knows the answer or something.

With as much conviction as she's capable of, she mentally tells the tiny Mabels to stuff it.

Shutting the door soundly behind her, Mabel performs the necessary dance it takes to reach Dipper's bed without stepping on any of the old laundry or dog-eared books or empty cereal bowls that swallow up his questionably-smelling carpet. "Hey," she says when she reaches her destination, hating how timid her voice sounds. "S'it cool if I hang in here a little while?"

Dipper raises his eyebrows, but shrugs anyway, giving her a halfhearted nod. Confusion pretty much radiates off his entire being. She doesn't blame him, since showing up in his bedroom this late at night is kind of a hardcore breach of the whole unspoken 'casually avoiding each other' arrangement-type-thing they have going on these days.

Shame blooms in her tummy, but Mabel does her best to ignore it. Lifting the blue comforter, she slips into his slightly creaky full-sized bed (same one he's had since they were six, upgrading from their tiny lil' princess castle and race car beds) just like she used to on occasion before all the weirdness went down, for late night Netflix marathons, or advice-seeking conversations, or even the rare nightmare placation. She could always come to him, and it was never weird or anything.

But tonight, the platonic distance that was always kinda naturally kept between them extends by a few solid inches. Beside her she can feel Dipper stiffen, but otherwise he doesn't move. He doesn't really look at her either, just keeps staring up at the ceiling.

Well, crudmuffins. Now that she's actually in here, right next to him, she can't for the life of her think of what to say. The longer the silence strains on, the more Mabel's chest tightens—but there must be some sort of blockage in her brain or something, because the words still aren't coming.

Dipper seems to be handling the silence just as badly as she is ('cos uncomfortable silence is just not a thing they *do*) since he's the one who cracks first, fidgeting in his spot a safe distance away from her and clearing his throat in a way that's probably meant to be nonchalant, but just ends up coming off awkward. Dipper has never been any good at feigning nonchalance.

"...How'd your date go?" he asks finally. Mabel cringes. She knew he was probably going to ask something like this, but still held out the hope that he wouldn't, and she definitely didn't think that he'd *open* with it. Dang it, Dip! And of course he's using his bored 'I really don't care either way' voice. On anyone else, it would work. Four days ago, it even might've worked on her. Ugh, this is so *weird*...

Mabel takes in a breath, fifty different answers flittering around on the tip of her tongue. She hums, carefully deciding on an airy, "Could'a been better, I guess." Her hands are jittery where they clutch the blanket almost up to her chin.

"Better? Better how? What, did one of Aiden's hairs fall out of the consummate gel mold?"

Wow. He really can't help himself, can he? Mabel elbows him lightly for the snark. "Can you *not* be a butt right now, please?" She twiddles her thumbs and sighs. "His hair was sculpted perfection, thank-you-very-much." The words almost catch in her throat before she pushes them out, "...I'm... I'm the one with the problem."

By the way Dipper shifts beside her she can tell that her answer has caught him off guard. He clears his throat again, daring a glance in her direction. When he speaks, there's a twinge to his voice that gives her the sneaking suspicion that he's fighting to keep it even. "Whuh'do you mean?"

Her mouth goes dry, her tongue threatening to stick to the roof of it. Deep down she knows what she *wants* to say. Finding it within her to actually *say* those words to the person lying next to her is a whole 'nother dealio.

Mabel gulps, breaking away from his gaze. Inside her brain the choir of tiny Mabels shriek louder than ever. She's pretty sure one of them just flipped a table.

What are you doing! *What are you doing!*

Oh whatever, she's just gonna say it—

"Well... kiiiinda hard to enjoy a romantic date with your bee-eff when there's another dude on your mind the entire time." Mabel grumbles. "Urggg. My first official boyfriend, and it was going so *well*..." she whines dramatically, "Ho ho, but *now*—ugh, it's like when I'm with him you're there too even though you're not, it makes stuff that used to be great

icky and gross and has really thrown off my expert flirting game, *let me tell you, sir*—” Oh, nuts and a half. She’s rambling. “And don’t even get me *started* on when he kissed me earlier and instead of it being awesome and adorable the only thing going through my head was that the whole thing felt super *blaggh* compared to—compared to—”

Something in the land of tiny panicking Mabels spontaneously sets fire and she remembers herself again. “—Ugh, just—thanks a lot, Dipper,” she finishes up her rant with a sarcastic mutter before she shuts her mouth and abruptly pulls the blanket over her head, her heart beating way too fast.

Oh no. She said it. What the heck. She actually *said* it. It’s probably the most enormous can of worms she’s ever chiseled open in her life, and, and great, now super slimy worms are gonna rain down all around her. . . or something. To be honest, she really doesn’t know what to expect. This is extremely, critically, *insanely* uncharted territory.

Dipper still hasn’t said anything, and this weird anticipation-like emotion in her gut that she absolutely refuses to label as anticipation is killing her. Mabel gathers up enough courage to peek out at him from under the blanket. Of course, predictably, he looks completely bewildered and lost, eyebrows raised, cheeks darkened with red.

“Um. I’m. . . sorry?” is his tentative peace offering.

She makes a show of rolling her eyes at him and huffs, fully shoving the blanket away and folding her hands tightly over her chest. All her energy at the moment gets dedicated to glaring up at the ceiling, because acting angry is so much easier than facing the root of their bizarro problem. “Yeah, well. . . you *should* be.”

There’s another lingering silence, leaving Mabel to lie there and wonder what exactly she thought she was trying to accomplish by coming in here. Ugh, this was such a stupid plan, if you could even call it a plan, which it wasn’t really at all. This was just a crazy whim that is probably gonna end badly. Stupid, *stupid*. . . she should leave. Right now. She should go get back in her own bed. Her and Dipper, they can work this all out tomorrow, armed with the safety of daylight and clear-ish thinking heads. Yes. Good plan. Totally. Yeah. The tiny Mabels nod their approval.

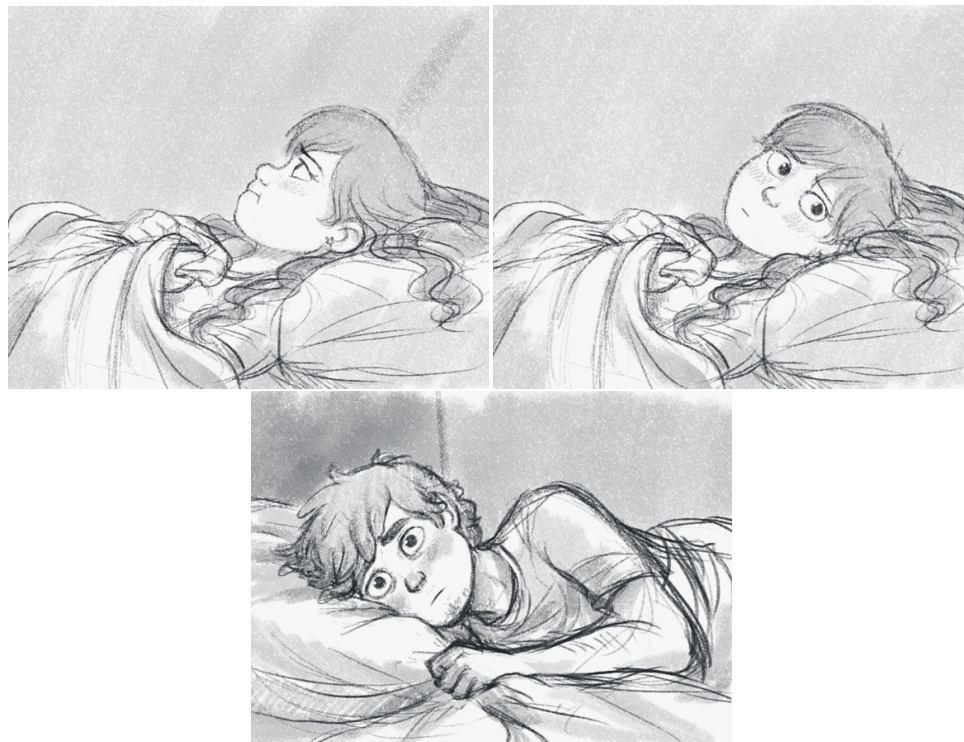
“Mabel,” she hears Dipper whisper through the dark, his deep, rasping tone catching her off guard and ruining her ‘plan’ as quickly as it had formed. The sound of her name shatters the quiet like a rock on a severely cracked windshield, that last straw before the pressure breaks, and everything. . . just. . .

“. . . *W-what*,” Mabel responds, voice catching, still attempting to be angry and sound like she has at least has an inkling of the veiled message she’s been trying to communicate to her brother, but failing horribly. Then turning her head decisively on the pillow to look Dipper straight in the eye, stupidly thinking she’d be prepared for whatever she might see.

Of course, she isn’t. She forgets to breathe for a second at the way he’s looking at her now, the moonlight from his open blinds catching on the corners of his eyes and making them look bigger than ever.

There's fear—yep, definitely fear, and plenty of it. She can see it in the creases between his eyebrows, the tightness of his mouth, the set of his jaw.

But then, there's... there's that crazy intense *something* that Mabel witnessed for the first time four days ago, right before Dipper leaned in and initiated that unforeseen lips-on-lips business. It's there in his eyes. The something that's pretty unnerving on one hand, but also... that she can't seem to look away from, that sends her stomach into a flip-flop frenzy. Sort of like the tummy flips Aiden will give her sometimes, but turbocharged, unpredictable, cracked out on Smile Dip. A buttload of Smile Dip.



It's most certainly not a look you're supposed to get from your brother.

Mabel bites her lip. Oof. Yeah. It's kinda written all over his face, now that she sees it. Lightheadedly, she wonders how long Dipper has been thinking about her this way. How it even came to be in the first place. And how long he's been hiding his feelings from her and everybody else, holding it all in, no one to even talk to about it. Because whatever this is, from the look in Dipper's eyes, it's not hard to tell that there's... like... *a lot* of it.

"I..."

Dipper's non-sentence never gets finished. He blinks at her through the darkness, his eyes huge and brimming with of all sorts of things no one is saying out loud, and Mabel... just blinks back at him. She can almost hear the agonizing debate going on in that big brain of his. His head sort of twitches on the pillow in her direction, but just as quickly stills. The hesitancy is almost palpable. It's obvious her brother wants to do something, very very badly, but it's also something terrifying, something he might regret. Something that can't

be taken back, once it happens. And he's desperately searching her eyes for some sort of signal on what to do, what she wants him to do, what's okay, what's not okay... any input all.

But Mabel's expression stays blank. She feels guilty, leaving Dipper floundering like this, but she just... she just can't. Make this sort of... choice. This is all much newer to her than it is to him, she can barely keep up as it is.

Whatever happens next is up to him.

His Adam's apple bobs visibly up and down his neck, and she can see him suck in a breath. Slowly, so slowly that she almost gripes at him to just *do* something already, Dipper leans over and kisses her cheek. He lets his lips linger for a bit, full and soft and making her heart *ba-bump ba-bump* away in her chest.

He backs away, his eyes never leaving hers. Welp. Dipper has officially made the call, apparently unable to help himself from succumbing to that scary, unknown, this-is-totally-wrong-isn't-it route, and now that he's actually made a sort-of move, Mabel is... totally, totally lost on what to do next. She guesses she didn't actually think he'd dare go down this road, which was dumb of her in hindsight, considering he'd already sailed right over that taboo line with a running leap a few days ago. Mabel stays frozen in place, at a loss. She can't help but watch Dipper with a sort of morbid fascination as he lays there, trying his hardest to gauge her reaction. Most likely over-analyzing the possibilities of what could be going through her head, at the same time trying not to look too desperate.

... Yyyeahh, he's not doing a very good job with that last thing. *Aw, Dips. You big awko-taco nerd.* There's a swelling feeling in Mabel's chest at the earnest, kind of adorably insecure look on his face. Her brother is such a... ugh, such a sweet dork. Most especially to her. The sweetest and the dorkiest. Making himself all vulnerable-like, wearing his heart on his sleeve... for her. Without really thinking about it Mabel cracks a small but warm smile, reaching over to brush her palm over his burning cheek.

All she did was touch his face, but the tender action might as well have been a gunshot at the Kentucky Derby for Dipper, because *whoops*—next thing she registers is the loud creak of the mattress from him quickly closing the distance between them with a single scooch, and a split second later his mouth is on hers. *Woahwoahwoahtherebuddy* this is so *much* already, Dipper is kissing her like his life depends on it and once again Mabel is struggling to keep up. You would think the world was minutes away from exploding or something in the way he kisses so dang urgently, unyielding and full of passion that she definitely was *not* aware he had in him ten seconds ago.

Dipper's hand disappears into her hair, his long fingers threading through the thick locks to cradle the back of her head, and he makes this tiny breathless sound that triggers a much-too-hot clenching in her belly. Jeez. This is nothing like the sweet little kiss he gave her the other day. *This* is heavy, *this* is the product of someone who has decided they're not gonna hold back anymore. Or maybe he can't hold back anymore. Whichever it is, it's really

hard to miss the pent-up feelings that are pretty much pouring out of the guy nonstop, and admittedly this is sorta scaring the bejesus out of her, but Mabel doesn't jerk away, doesn't flinch even once.

Oh-kay, this, this is definitely happening...

Second after second ticks by, Dipper is still kissing the crap out of her, and Mabel still hasn't pushed him away, like she did four days ago... officially making their second kiss three times as long as their first. Uh oh. While she allows her lips to mold to his, the tiny Mabels all of a sudden decide to kick back in, reeeally letting her have it this time with the screaming doubts. Ohhh man, hold up, wait a sec, this is—oh, yikes, she's making out with her *brother*, augh, this is just totally gross and weird, right? Right? It's completely nutso bonkers! Sane, well-adjusted people don't make out with their brothers and that's that. This is going way too far, she should definitely push him away. She *needs* to push him away. Dangit, push him away! No no no, this can't be what she came in here for, can it?!

But then, why did you come in here, Mabel? Why'd you get into bed with him, huh, huh? Why are your arms around his neck? Why are you kissing him back?

Well then! If this isn't just the dooziest of dilemmas she's ever gotten herself into!

Now cradling her jaw with one warm but also pretty sweaty palm, Dipper manages to push the raging conflict to the backburner when he goes and pushes his tongue in her mouth. Well! Well hey there, Dipper's tongue! What up! Never uh, never had you 'round, before... Mabel clenches her closed eyelids as their kiss quickly gets wet, and determined, and Dipper gets right down to business by doing this twirly-scoop move thing that actually makes her *moan* against him. Mabel's eyes pop open and she flushes with embarrassment. *Woah* there... that's never happened before with Aiden. Aiden has never made her moan.

Ughh, no thinking about Aiden! Bad brain! Not the time, clearly not the time!

Being the perceptive person that he is, Dipper does it again, rolling his tongue against hers in that delectably sensual, tiny-moan-inducing way. And then again. Hot dang. If she'd been standing up instead of lying down, her knees would've buckled already. Holy mother of canoley, wha-*whaa*? Since when does Dipper have *moves*? Where the frick did her bro learn this stuff? He's never even had a real girlfriend before!

Dipper moves his head down to press open-mouthed kisses against her neck while Mabel grabs handfuls of the back of his t-shirt, and meanwhile the tiny Mabels are still at it, angry to have been pushed aside, yelling and screaming and pulling at their tiny heads of curly brown hair. Half of her still can't get over the madness of it all, but okay already, *fine*, she admits it! The other half sort of doesn't want the madness to stop, ever. She's never been held or kissed quite like *this* before and... and... stupid moral compass, stupid reality, shut up! Go away! She doesn't want to hear it, any of it, because whatever was missing from that kiss with her boyfriend earlier is suddenly right here in this room, right now, exciting and unbelievably electric, hers for the taking. A-and—and she's just made the executive decision to take it, okay? So once again, stuff it, tiny Mabels! Be gone! Away with you! You have no power here!

One of Dipper's hands begins to glide up and down her side, from her thigh all the way up to her shoulder, leaving warm tingles in its wake. It keeps solidly and safely to this fixed path until it strays off course on one of the journeys back upwards, tentatively cupping her breast through her nightshirt instead. Bizarrely enough Mabel finds herself reacting to this new development by vividly picturing the hamster glam-rock band that happens to be printed on this particular shirt of hers, the same shirt her brother now happens to be rubbing her nipple through, boy howdy, his thumb making soft, pressing circles *right* over the gray-hamster-with-the-blonde-fringe-and-pink-electric-guitar's face, probably—her breath hitches, her thighs clench—haha hoookay there Mabel! Now is really not the time to be thinking about hamsters in gogo boots! *Ugh, what is wrong with you—!*



But then Dipper makes this deep, throaty noise, the sound vibrating out of his mouth and into hers, which for some reason rids her of her invasive hamster thoughts. Dang. Dip really *does* always have her back, whether he's aware of it or not.

Now, Mabel just tries to focus on what she's feeling. What he's *making* her feel. And... she quickly comes to the conclusion that being touched like this by him is making her... squirmy. Really squirmy. The frustratingly good, very damp kind of squirmy. So when Dipper's hand leaves her breasts to venture off and explore the curve of her lower back, she's left even squirmier—and wanting more.

She feels his fingertips trickle lower to delicately trace along the groove where her legs meet her butt, and it's really hard not to clench her thighs together, that achy need for pressure only growing stronger. The feeling frightens her a little. Mabel shudders, keeping her eyes strictly closed, kissing him harder in an attempt to squash out her fears. Dipper responds instantly, pressing in closer, breathing in sharply through his nose.

Oh, hello. And she's just realized he's on top of her. When did that happen?

There's a faraway voice somewhere inside of Mabel that says this is too much to handle at once, that things are getting too carried away, that now is probably the time to go ahead and push Dipper off of her—but instead she circles her arms back around his neck, arches her back, presses herself up against him. *Against him*, against him. A breathy squeak of surprise—surprise, along with some other, squirmy emotion—slips from her mouth when she feels how hard he is through his boxers. Oh. Oh. Well. What was she expecting to feel? The surprise dies away but her heart still beats faster from knowing that she, Mabel, got him that way. Like, man. Dipper... wants her. Like *that*. It finally sinks in. He *wants* her.

She can't help it. She does the first thing that pops into her head, and grinds on him. Just a little bit. Maybe it was instinct. Who knows. Dipper seems to be A-ok with it anyway, cursing and stuttering her name, not bothering to hide the desire in his voice anymore.

Just-a-little-bit turns into *oops-I-can't-seem-to-stop*, because this feels stupid good, this feels like what she needs right now. And he's so into it too, so into *her*, and it shows, and Mabel realizes she likes that—uhhh she never thought she'd be using the word sexy in reference to her brother ever in her life, even just in her head, but heyhowdyhey looks like there really is a first time for everything—so no, no stopping, sorry, tiny Mabels.

She kisses his neck. Then licks it. His skin is all hot and sweaty and salty. She wants to bite it, so she does, taking some of his skin between her teeth and sucking hard, hips still grinding away. Dipper drops his head and whimpers, high and gravelly against her ear, “Mabes holy *shit*,” his voice cracking a little. Regular Mabel would probably have poked fun at him for that, but she doesn't feel quite like Regular Mabel right now. Now she only moans into his skin, the sound rousing more breathy curses out of Dipper. By this point it doesn't even really feel like she's inside her own body anymore, she's just... consumed. Totally consumed by this heated urgency between her and her twin that came rocketing out of left field.

“H-holy fuck, oh my god, Mabel...”

The tiny Mabels are weak and feeble by this point—even more so when Dipper starts to rub his excited-boy-biz back against her with firm little rolls of his hips, hooooo bananas—but they are still determined to pester her until their dying breaths. *But wait*, they murmur frantically, *this is Dipper! Remember Dipper? Your twin bro? Bro, as in brother, as in family, as in related to you?! Howww did things escalate to here, again?* She can't recall. At its core, the her-plus-Dipper equation still doesn't make sense. If this was a long time comin', nobody ever stopped to let Mabel in on that little fact.

None of this makes sense, but it's like her body and her brain have decided to run away without her, too fast for her to keep up. Honestly, Mabel doesn't super care about keeping up anymore. She's a little preoccupied by how the air in Dipper's bedroom feels like it's coming to a boil. All this kissing and grinding is reaching some sort of peak. Whoops. The point of no return has already been passed, hasn't it? For both of them.

Suddenly Dipper is wordlessly sitting up, reaching back to tug his shirt over his head. Mabel follows his lead and scrambles to take off hers too, her fingers jumpy as they grab the purple hem and pull—hasta la vista, glam-rock hamsters—by the time she gets it off Dipper has moved to her side, and in a mutual flurry of clothing, Mabel frantically shimmies out of her penguin pajama pants and the pink heart undies she wears for good luck on dates, while Dipper practically rips down his faded plaid boxers, kicking them down his legs and out of sight.

Once all the clothes are tossed away, the twins turn back to each other and there's a bit of a halt to the mania, as if someone pointed a remote at the two of them and hit pause. Mabel's cheeks explode with color, her heart pounding. Thaaat's... wow. Yep. That sure is definitely Dipper's dipstick right there. Sorta pointing right at her. No coming back from that one, no-siree. Yeah it's dark in his room but *still*, it's not *that* dark, and she's seeing her brother naked for the first time since they were cute little toddlers who still took baths together, aaand a *heck* of a lot has changed since then, and uh, this is very... different. The piece of Mabel's brain that still thinks this is all really heekin' weird flares back up. She can see Dip obviously staring too, his mouth hanging open a little, and wonders if he's having similar thoughts about her.

But then his gaze flicks up and they make eye contact—burning, intoxicating eye contact—and as quick as the awkward pause came, it's gone. The invisible remote-wielding entity has pressed play again, allowing Dipper to surge forward and kiss her like he really means it, allowing Mabel to kiss him right back. Looks like it's just not heekin' weird enough for either of them to flip the kill switch on what's inevitably in the works here, because now he's guiding her down to the bed and crawling back over her, and she sure isn't stopping him.

Reflexively she spreads her legs, and Dipper gladly shifts down to settle in between them, carefully covering her body with his. Mabel shivers, gooseflesh breaking out on her arms, because now all *his* skin is on *her* skin and she can *feel* him, tentatively pressing up against a very sensitive spot that no one but her has ever touched before. He feels really warm and hard and foreign, and there's no denying that her body is straight up throbbing at the contact, almost shaking with excited-but-also-sorta-panicky anticipation—oh man, oh *man* is this really actually happening? Are they actually gonna go *through* with this? They are, aren't they? Seriously, what? *What?!*

Dipper closes his eyes and begins to press more of those longing kisses along her neck before he freezes suddenly, dropping his forehead to her shoulder and cursing under his breath. He mutters an apology and stammers out that he doesn't have a condom, sounding weirdly embarrassed about it considering this whole Friday night bro-sis hookup was definitely not a *planned* thing (oh god, it hits her again, *we're not kidding around here he's bringing up condoms this really is happening*).

Mabel takes in a deep breath, exhaling shakily. *Last chance*, the back of her brain screams at her from far, far away, *abort abort abort*—her mouth is a little dry when she makes a split-second decision and tells him it's fine, she's been on the pill since she was fifteen 'cause of bad period cramps. Dipper responds with a vaguely surprised "Oh," before falling silent, his face still sort of hidden in her neck.

The silence stretches out just a tad too long. Mabel shifts awkwardly underneath him, hyperaware of the way she can feel his body throbbing, too, how she can feel it every time he twitches. Her hands rest very lightly on the surface of Dipper's skin, just above his hips, as the oh-so-casual contraceptive talk and silence combo has slightly thrown off her groove, and she can't figure out where the heck to put them all of a sudden (resting them on the

bed felt way too limp and weird). Her large brown eyes dart from the ceiling to the closed bedroom door to the curve of his backside that she can see from this angle past his shoulder, before they hurriedly dart back up to the ceiling.

Finally Dipper breaks the silence with a shortly-worded whisper, his voice much softer and croakier than before; he sounds *so* freaking nervous which only makes her even *more* nervous. Mabel automatically whispers something back that hopefully sounds placating enough, because the stillness and the quiet are really starting to bother her, and the nerves are threatening to overwhelm the squirminess, and she just needs for things to get *moving* again—

And then—and *then*—fingers are inching between hers on the pillow and holding tight, hips carefully pressing down, and the whole thing is a slow burn of heat and slickness and gradual pressure until Mabel feels fuller than she's ever felt before in her entire life—full of need, desperation, confusion, *him*.

Oh god, o-ohgodohgodholys—

Dipper keeps still, shuddering a hushed, strangled exhale into her hair, while Mabel feels like the voice has been stricken out of her, her mouth open but no sound coming out. She feels him squeeze her hand, kiss her cheek. More whispers come, hot against her ear—this time he's asking if she's okay. Mabel nods her head quickly, freeing a heavy breath she didn't realize she'd been holding. Utterly overwhelmed, she just keeps her eyes shut tight and clings to his narrow back when he eventually starts to move gingerly, honest to god incapable of doing anything more than that.

The land of tiny screaming Mabels has gone deathly silent. Now, Mabel hears nothing but labored breathing in her ear, a breathy moan that she thinks might've started out as her name. The slow, steady creaking of his bed frame. Her own breathing, loud and ragged and losing control fast.

She can feel how careful Dipper is trying to be with her, his body and limbs holding in the tension it takes for him to move this painstakingly slow. Which she really is grateful for, and if she wasn't so one-thousand-percent preoccupied with their current activity she'd glomp-hug him, infinitely appreciative that she didn't have to ask; it's stopped being uncomfortable, at least, but she's still getting used to the feeling.

Dipper props himself up on his hands, his gentle rhythm never faltering as he bends to press their lips together for a kiss, one that starts off sweet and slow but soon turns into something hot and maybe a little sloppy. They break apart with a gasp. Mabel cracks her eyelids open just in time to catch the hazy, adoring, almost tipsy look in her brother's eyes before he slowly kisses his way across her cheek, then down her neck. His lips head steadily south, leaving little nibbles here and there. She clenches her eyes closed again.

She knows it's coming but her breath still hitches audibly when he brings his mouth down on her nipple and goes about doing these spine-tingling sucking motions, his tongue flicking and swirling with a vengeance. Mabel presses her lips tightly together to stifle the high pitched sound rising in her throat, overwhelmed as ever; Dipper hums a quiet moan

into her skin. He switches to give her other breast the same attention, while his fingers trace along every inch of her skin he can reach, eager and restless. Mabel breathes harder, her rainbow polish-chipped nails clawing at his shoulder blades before dragging their way up into his bushy hair.

God. And his hips never stop *moving*. As slow and steady as Dipper keeps the pace, as attentive and doting as all his movements are, it all still has Mabel writhing, her thighs starting to tremble noticeably, her fists gripping handfuls of his hair. It's so *hard* to stay relatively still and quiet while also staying sexy and *normal* because every time she feels him push inside, it makes her want to wiggle, full-body shiver, thrash back against his bed like a person trying to get out of a straitjacket. Whatever she's feeling right now is intense, and way too friggin' *real* and... it's starting to maybe feel like a little too much—

Oh god, it *is*, all of this is too much, *way* too much, wave after wave of pure sensation knocking her down on her metaphorical butt every time she tries in vain to get back on her feet. On her feet, steady, where things make sense.

“Di-dipper,” Mabel whimpers, in need of some sort of an anchor, because she feels like she's going to float away, or burst into pieces, or maybe both? At her call he returns to her at once, resting his forearms on either side of her contorted face. He leans down, his sweaty forehead coming to press against her own, hot, heavy breaths mixing between them. His curly bangs hang down around her face, cocooning them in, shielding her from everything that exists outside of the two of them.

Dipper tilts his head to gently kiss her parted lips before he moves back, just far enough for their eyes to meet. The *it's-okay-I've-got-you* look on his face makes Mabel feel safe and comforted enough to re-grasp some semblance of control and think coherent thoughts again, like... how *great* it feels, actually, to be so loved, warm, wanted... how no one has ever made her feel like this before. And right here in this moment, the fact that it's *Dipper* introducing her to all these new feelings, loving her so unquestionably, somehow feels more right than anything. Her and her twin, just the two of them, just like it's always been. It suddenly seems so fitting that she ended up sharing this moment with him, rather than someone else.

A burst of appreciation and *want* for her brother streaks through her from head to toe. It has Mabel tightening her arms around his neck, pulling him down into the most searing kiss she's ever given to anybody, *ever*. It has her bucking up her hips, over and over until the boy in her arms starts to tremble, choking out muffled grunts and heavy breaths against her mouth as he twitches and pulses inside her. She holds him there, keeping him as still as she can, needing to feel every tiny convulsion Dipper's body makes as he falls completely apart. The experience is unrestrained, and profoundly intimate, filling her to the brim with a heavy emotion she's too riled up to try to name.

When Dipper finally relaxes, the first thing he does is properly kiss her back again (right after he heaves out a breathless “*Holy shit,*”—eyy, not too shabby, Mabel-girl). One soft, appreciative peck leads to another, his intensity quickly escalating into another outpouring of passionate kisses, overwhelming Mabel to the point where a super-squirmy sound comes quietly keening out of her mouth.

Dipper moves back, breathing heavily. He must finally register the way her body still hums and fidgets underneath him, since that classic ‘determined Dipper’ look comes over his face, and he pulls out and rolls off to her side. He runs a hand up her thigh before easing it between her legs, and Mabel closes her eyes and lets her head lay back into the pillow, her breathing slowly-but-surely turning ragged again.

His technique is a little clumsy at first. Still feels nice, and seriously not bad for someone who’s more than likely totally new at this, but after a minute or so the almost-there frustration gets Mabel to lay her hand on top of Dipper’s and guide him into what she wants. The best she can, at least. Luckily her brother is nothing if not a very intuitive, and *eager*, learner. Soon he’s figured out how to touch her in a way that gets her squirming beside him, tiny gasps squeaking out of her with every other breath she takes. Mabel finally lets go of the *gotta-stay-cute-and-sexy* impulse that’s been buzzing around in the back of her mind and loses herself in how good it feels, her body wiggling however it dang well pleases, her features twisting up into undoubtedly weird faces, legs shaking and spazzing. One hand fists the sweat-dampened bed sheets, while the other grips desperately around his forearm, shakily holding him in place right above his working wrist in an unspoken plea for him not to stop or slow down. She doesn’t have to say a word, he willingly obliges her, despite the fact that his wrist is starting to tremble.

She just barely registers Dipper softly asking if she’s close. If speaking words was currently on the table, she would’ve said *duhh ya dork*, but right now Mabel can only nod faintly.

It was not a lie. Barely another ten seconds pass before she’s clenching hard under those diligent, probably-cramped fingers, her back arching, mouth opening wide. Even with her own eyes sealed shut, seeing nothing but stars on the backs of her eyelids, she can still feel his eyes glued on her, watching her unravel. She has to bite back the moan that wants to rip from her throat, but some of it still manages to escape in the form of a soft, warbling squeak.

Eventually her spine goes straight again, falling back to the mattress, a bit of reality crashing down with it.

Woah. That... *hoo*, boy, that just happened. Her and... her and *Dipper* just... and it felt *good*. Amazing, even.

Oh man. She can't really get over this, as her first go at sex was most definitely *not* on her to do list when she woke up this morning. And sex with her brother? Not even within a zillion feet of the to do list. But yikes, nuts to the to do list, apparently. 'Cause it just happened anyway. The can of worms she opened earlier that night turned out to be much, much bigger than she could have ever anticipated. Super, uh. Super, super wormy. Yup.

Bright red and breathing hard in the aftermath, her eyes still closed and her head spinning, Mabel feels the brother in question sidle up to kiss her forehead. She calls it in her head a second before it happens—and sure enough, a second later, his mouth is back on hers.

Maybe she's still got a major case of floaty-brain from her orgasm or something—it *was* one heck of a big o—because at first she just lies there, motionless aside from the rise and fall of her chest, while his lips affectionately skate and press over hers. It's only when Dipper glides his tongue along her bottom lip in a prodding, 'heyy, I'm here' sort of way that it occurs to her to kiss him back. Which, to her credit, she does right away, opening her mouth, bringing a hand to the back of his head to pull him closer.

They break apart. She can feel him hovering near her face a bit longer before he moves to sit up, and it's only then that Mabel blearily opens her eyes.

Once again she's greeted with the reality of Dipper's dark, cluttered bedroom, bits of moonlight trickling in through the crookedly hanging blinds. She foggily looks over to where her very naked brother is hunched over and rummaging around near the foot of his bed. He grabs up a clean-looking white t-shirt from a pile of clothes, always the man with the plan.

Dipper turns back around, shirt in hand, pausing when he sees her watching him. His eyes are sleepy and warm, his brown curls sticking up every which way, thanks to her own restless hands. He gives her a tender look, his head tilting a tiny bit to one side. His lips stretch into a shy, lopsided, entirely radiant smile.

Oh... wow.

Mabel swallows, her stomach fluttering like crazy. She's not entirely sure if she's ever looked at her bro quite the way she did just now.

Dipper crawls back to her side, only half trying to avoid her eyes as he gently cleans her up. The temperature of the room is quickly returning to normal, but Mabel barely has it in her to blush at his bashfully doting work, still floating along on the afterglow high. He gets the job done fast, balling up the shirt further and mopping up the sheets. When it's the best it's gonna get, he chucks away the sticky garment, throws his comforter over the two of them, and doesn't hesitate to wrap her up in an embrace, taking her hand and curling himself against her back to spoon her.

The room gets very still and very quiet, and neither of them have said anything yet. Is that weird? Mabel bites her lip. It feels kind of weird, for them. Although these are, uh, special circumstances. This is some brand spankin' new territory for her and the Dipster, *that's* for sure.

If she's being completely honest with herself, being held by her brother like this feels a little odd. A nice n' warm, 'huh, well that's new,' kind of odd, but still... odd. Having someone you've known your whole life suddenly treat you differently has a bit of a topsy turvy effect, and now that they're not all caught up in that super charged, gotta-get-into-each-other's-pants-*now* heat between them, Mabel can't help but be hyperaware of it. The straight up *romance* thing.

Like, they've held hands jillions of times, but never like this, with their fingers all tightly twined together, his thumb stroking her knuckle every so often. And the way he's got his arms around her with all this skin-on-skin is lightyears away from any hug they've shared before, awkward sibling kind or not. It's just a very novel kind of weird, because before tonight, aside from that one little sweet but hecka awkward kiss a few days ago—which he took right back anyway, after she shot him down—Dipper has only ever treated her like Mabel-who-is-his-sister. Before tonight, he's never treated her like Mabel-who-is-a-girl.

They've also never bumped uglies before tonight, buuut, that one pretty much goes without saying.

Mabel can feel Dipper's chest pressing into her back when he breathes in a content sigh. He takes his time with it, exhaling slowly through his nose. Relief might as well be written in the action in glaring capital letters. His lips move to her shoulder, where he plants a few slow kisses, just like the guy lead would during the post-saucy parts of all her most favorite romcoms. Just like a boyfriend would. Or a lover (blah, *lover*, she's not mature enough for that word). Consequently Mabel has to keep reminding herself that that's *Dipper*, behind her. Her bro-bro, her broseph, her loyal broticus maximus. Her fellow mystery twin, her partner in crime, the Dippinsauce to her Mabelfries, yadda yadda yadda. Her sweet, nerdy, five-minutes-younger brother. Not boyfriend. Not lover. Brother.

Or—maybe—could he be both? Is that even possible?

Well, she thinks, her skin glowing with heat again, *technically, he just proved that.*

But... just because she *could* have him as both (maybe? She doesn't know), doesn't mean she should. Everything she's learned so far in life says that obviously, that would be wrong. Like... right? It's the ol' big I. Incest. Wrong. Creepy, gross, unnatural, not recommended. Everybody knows that. Doi. It's not a hard concept to grasp.

Mabel bites the inside of her cheek uneasily. Well, at least before the other day, it wasn't... psh, it was as graspable as night and day. Easy-peasy. And not even a thing that crossed her mind anyway. But then one day, whaddya know, she got in a fight with her brother about him being a withdrawn jerk whenever her boyfriend was around, which culminated in him kissing her, on the lips, out of *nowhere*, in a very un-brotherly fashion... and she became the tiniest bit less sure. And now... *now* she's all naked and cuddly with her brother in his bed, after a doing a bunch of stuff with him that would probably squick the heck outta the vast majority of like, *everybody*, and, um, she is much, much less sure about the concept...

Okay, she's one-hundred-percent less sure, because just going and stamping a big, red 'wrong' label on it means that everything that just happened between her and Dipper was wrong. All of it. Wrong. Creepy, gross, unnatural, not recommended.

And... and it's so *hard* to call it that, any of that. Not when it felt so meaningful and nice (actually nice is putting it too lightly, more like wow-wowee-wowness squared, cubed), not when Mabel feels so safe and content tucked away with him now, warm fuzzies all around.

... Ugh. Complicated moral junk is really not her forte.

Mabel is only going around in circles at this point, and it's late, and she's tired, and in the moment it still feels nice, lying here all cuddled up with Dipper. So she tries her best to push the daunting questions out of her mind. Luckily, behind her Mr. HappyPants (okay he's not wearing pants... details) is radiating happy so purely and obviously that he might as well be bonking her over the back of the head with it. She's gotta admit the feeling is adorably contagious, making caring about whatever's gonna happen tomorrow less and less of a priority.

She yawns, snuggling back against him, and he gladly holds her closer, kissing her shoulder again. Forget tomorrow. Right now all she wants is to fall asleep to the feel of his arms around her in this suddenly super-duper comfy bed...

"Mabel?"

Mabel's eyes shoot open, automatically fixating on the first thing she sees—a Nirvana poster on the opposite wall—almost as if she's afraid to look at anything else. That was the first word either of them have said since it happened... her name. Scratchy, hushed and shy.

Why does she feel so nervous all of a sudden?

"Mmhm...?"

"... I love you."

Oh. *That's* why.

Mabel's shoulders go rigid. Her skin prickles. A cold feeling overtakes her, iciness flooding through her body and stamping out the comfortable warmth that had been simmering all over a moment ago. Oh no. No, no, no. Something tells her that Dipper ain't talkin' about good old fashioned brotherly love. Nope, definitely not.

And that wasn't him 'fessing up to having a crush on her, either. She's probably a complete moron for ever thinking that this was something in crush territory, huh.

The icy feeling rises higher and higher, closing in over her head, drowning her.

He loves her. He *loves* her.

Well—well, *duhh*, of course he does, Mabel you dunderhead, why *else* would he have—he wouldn't've just—oh no, oh gosh, why does this declaration of love suddenly make everything so scary and real?

He's... *Dipper* is...

Ugh, just—! Hold up, time out, life, can you please stop getting more and more complicated for like *one freakin second!* Because there is some *serious* drownage going on over here! What... what is she supposed to do with this information? Why is he telling her this? What is he expecting her to say to that?

Aw fudge, Mabel, don't even try that shiz. You know exactly what he's expecting you to say, especially after what just went down on the sheets—or what he really wants you to say, at least, but—but—

Christ on a cracker, she didn't sign up for this. And it's—ugh, it's totally not his fault, she's just a total, *total* idiot who clearly didn't think this through, but—*gah*, and she *knows* him, she *knows* that even though Dipper is acting calm and quiet and his arms are still around her, he's majorly freaking out inside his head, questioning everything, a piece of his crazy-neurotic paranoid soul dying with each and every second that passes while she still hasn't said anything. Oh crap oh crap she has to *say* something, like, *now*, but nothing is coming to mind. Nothing at all. And that easily makes Mabel feel like the most horrible piece of poo-garbage on the face of the Earth.

She takes in a shallow breath, frantically trying to piece it all together. Okay, okay, so Dipper's side of the story is all out in the open now. He, uh, *loves*... h-he's in love with her. Apparently. Somehow. But how does *she* feel? Obviously the sisterly and best-friend love is there, bright and clear to her as day, vast and steadfast as ever. That'll *always* be there.

And—okay *yeah*, she can't deny that a large part of her, um... *enjoyed* this sorta random burst of offbeat intimacy between them, but... does all of that mean she's... does she actually...?

Aiden's smiling face flashes in her mind's eye and Mabel is struck with the overwhelming urge to curl into a ball and wail.

Love. Aw, heck. What would she even know about love, anyway?! A few days ago, she was five-hundred-percent sure that love was about dreamy blue eyes and matching boutonnieres and corsages, complete with a dumb fairytale ending where she and her adorable picture-perfect boyfriend get married and ride off into the sunset on horseback!

She wants to cry, she's *going* to cry, because she can't do it. She can't fill in her side of the Mabel-plus-Dipper thing. She can't tell him what she knows he's hoping to hear, that big ol' loaded statement of 'I love you too, Dipper,' because—because she'd never lie to him about something huge like this, and... she doesn't think it's true.

Ugh, but she can't break his heart, either. . . for cryin' out loud, this is Dipper! The person she cares for the most out of anyone else in the whole world—

Her eyelids squeeze shut, tears gathering fast beneath them. H-heyy, uh, magic remote-wielding entity guy, help a girl out with a rewind button here—except oh wait, there *is* no rewind button, because this is real life and the time-traveling measuring tape was confiscated a long time ago, and she can't take it back, she can't take any of it back—does she even want to take it back. . .? Uh, well—*well*—if it means *not* accidentally leading on her twin brother in the most gut-wrenching way possible, and probably finking up their relationship forevermore, then, sorta, yeah! Most certainly yes!

Oh, *why did she come in here!* Seriously, what in the heck did she think was going to happen!

She didn't think. That's the problem. She didn't think at *all*, not even a little bit. Her date with Aiden had left her so strangely disappointed and confused, and she was feeling sad and lonely, and bummed about how awkward this week had been between her and Dip, and she was missing her brother, and that friggin kiss had popped into her head for the millionth time, and she had a drive-by itch to go see if he was awake, so she did. Dipper was right all those times he's said it before, dangit, she never thinks things through!

And now, because of her, someone is going to get hurt. . . the most important someone.

Mabel sniffs audibly, her eyes fluttering open again, eyelashes clumped together with dewy little droplets. The smiley face on the Nirvana poster feels like it's mocking her, with its stupid tongue sticking out and its stupid exes for eyes. Silently telling her what a stupid, silly idiot she is.

Hey stupid silly idiot! He did all that stuff with you because he's in love with you, stupid silly idiot! Duh! And you did it with him because. . . why, exactly? Because you were feeling weird about that kiss and bummed about your lame date? Because he was making you feel good and wanted and you were ridin' the moment and decided what the hey why not? Yikes, good luck figuring out a way to tell him that! The guy who freaking loves you! Who is also your own freaking brother! PS, you're a disgusting, horrible person!

A couple of thick tears escape Mabel's watering eyes, dripping sideways down her face and disappearing into the pillow. Her stomach gives a nasty lurch. She feels sick.

Dipper has let go of her hand. The arms around her waist are loose and plagued with doubt. The former head-bonking happiness has been completely snuffed out, like the happiest ant in the world getting suddenly squished under a giant, inconsiderate shoe. By now he's most certainly figured out that shaky shoulders and sniffing and long periods of silence are all very bad signs after you've just told someone you *love* them. And she knows the crying has him convinced that he messed up badly, unforgivably badly, which is bogus and terrible and the complete opposite of the truth. She can practically feel his heart shattering from where his chest is still touching her back, and the urge to burst into much louder tears hits Mabel hard. No, no! She can't do this, she can't let this happen, not to Dipper—

“Wait, Mabel, I didn’t—are y—were you not—” his voice is tiny and hoarse, his breath starting to leave him in short, panicking gasps, his arms shrinking away from her. “Oh god, Mabel, I-I’m so—”

Before he can dive into whatever depressing apology speech he was on the verge of stammering out for whatever he thinks he just did, Mabel flips over to face him, jamming a finger to his lips and shutting him right the heck up. Dipper stares at her a-la deer in headlights, shaken, vulnerable, totally confused. She stares back at him, her eyes as teary and lost as his are. As she mentally scrambles to figure out her next move, she can’t remember ever feeling worse or more guilty than the way she feels right now, right this second.

Mabel has no idea how to fix this, or where to go from here. But she can’t stand seeing so much pain and uncertainty in her brother’s eyes. God, the way he’s looking at her now... he looks so scared, so close to broken, like he’s bracing himself for the worst, like he’s waiting for her to slap him or tell him she hates him or call him despicable or—

God Dip, no, please stop thinking what you’re thinking, please stop looking at me like that—

She does the only thing she can think of—takes her finger away from his lips, cups his face, kisses him—and prays that it’ll be enough. Dipper breathes in sharply with a start, but then his hand flies up to cling to hers and she feels him press into her and kiss back. It’s soft, quietly desperate, and seems to go on forever. That same warm, tingly sensation in her chest that bubbles up whenever they do this arises again, and Mabel snatches it up, holding onto it with everything she has.

When it’s over, she opens her eyes to find Dipper staring at her with a wistful look that she really can’t handle right now, and has to drop his gaze, instead looking down towards his slightly parted mouth. She pecks his lips one last time, then his cheek. She leans in close to his ear, pushing unruly curls aside to murmur, “Love you, bro,” in the most sincere voice she can muster.

It’s not a confession, but it’s all she can give right now. She hopes he’ll be able to understand. The last thing she wants to do is break his heart... but she can’t lie to his face, either.

Mabel pulls away, bravely looking Dipper in the eye again, and wills her lips to curl into a small smile. Her brother dutifully smiles back, but he’s obviously doing his best to hide the fact that in the end, it’s not quite enough. In turn she pretends not to notice what a poor job he’s doing. She wraps an arm around his back and leans into him, hiding against his chest, feeling his heart beat a mile a minute. A second or two passes, and then Dipper hugs her back, his hold on her severely lacking in the confidence it had before. She hears him sigh into her hair before he holds her a little closer.

Mabel’s eyes shut tightly. It’s gonna be a long night.



by Double Pines

Limbo

Mabel doesn't sleep in the dark. And it's not because she entertains any resonating childhood fears or anything, it's just, she's always loved to collect strings of lights, stringing them on her walls, over her desk, across her headboard. They're all different, too, in different funky shapes and lengths and colors—shaped like ice cream cones, stars, chili peppers, old-timey lanterns. Regular ol' Christmas lights. She's got 'em all. And Mabel always falls asleep with at least one or two of them plugged in, soft and glowing, like a much cooler version of a nightlight.

So when she wakes up in the middle of the night in complete darkness, at first she's just groggy and confused.

Then the fact that the red numbers glowing 4:15 am belong to *Dipper's* alarm clock finally registers in her groggy brain, and it all comes crashing back to her, the realization quickly sweeping away the sluggish cobwebs of sleep. More like violently blowing them away with class-four-tornado wind speeds.

Mabel's skin steadily grows blazing hot as the teenaged girl becomes hyper-aware of the warm body lying right behind her, the steady breaths hitting the back of her head. Of the not *completely* noodle-y anymore arm draped over her side, still holding her close even in his sleep. Of the dull throb of soreness between her legs. Of the fact that she's completely naked, and so is her brother.

R-right. Oh yeah. There you are, memories. That's right. Her and Dipper made out last night. A lot. Which somehow turned into them doing the no-pants-dance. And afterwards he told her that he *loved* her.

Alrighty then!

Okey-doke.

Uh.

Nooot really the sort of sleepover she was *used* to having with the ol' bro-bro, but, eyyy. Good. Good times...

... Hoooo-ly *crap*.

A frighteningly vivid memory of a sweaty, Big-Dipper-marked forehead pressing against hers while two pairs of hips moved in languid synchronization pops into her head, sending a spark to her crotch and fear streaking through her chest; Mabel squeezes her eyes shut tightly, banishing it, only succeeding for a second before a similar memory takes its place. Her breath comes out faster. The sheets still smell like them, she realizes. More knots twist in her stomach. She doesn't know what to think. All she knows is that she can't be here right now. She needs to be back in her own bed, stat. Preferably with a shirt on.

Carefully, Mabel maneuvers her way out from under Dipper's suddenly weighty arm, freezing in place when the bed creaks loudly. She holds her breath, watching him roll onto his back and inhale deeply in his sleep, his head turning towards the wall. The whole... naked-together thing sinks in again, and Mabel pretends with all her might that she's totally cool and chill and '*whatevs, man*' about the fact that Dipper's blanket has ridden down his gently-rising-and-falling belly in the process of her moving and him switching sleep positions, aaand if it were to ride down much further, she'd probably be able to see some stuff she's *really* not certain she's up to seeing again. Right now. At this moment in time. Haha, it's *fiine*. This is fine everythingisjusttotally*fine*.

Only when Dipper is still and breathing rhythmically again does Mabel continue her stealth mission, slipping out of bed and gingerly feeling around on the cluttered carpet for her clothes. Miraculously, her hands stumble across the important stuff, and she's able to step into her pajama pants and yank her hamster shirt over her head. The shirt's tag scratches at her chest as she realizes she put it on backwards, but whatever, it doesn't matter, having clothes on again is helping her feel slightly less panicky. She couldn't find her good-luck-on-dates underwear. Mabel's cheeks flush. That'll just have to stay behind.

She's halfway through tiptoeing her way to the door when her foot comes down on some food wrapper or other, making what feels like in the moment the loudest, most obnoxious crinkling sound in existence. Her starts to race and she bites her lip. *Dang it, Dip! Would it kill you to pick up your flippin' room for once—*

"...Mabel?" A voice that sounds as sleepy and confused as she'd been a few minutes ago croaks out from behind her, temporarily stopping her heart.

Mabel turns around slowly (resisting her arms' will to raise up in the air in the classic 'caught red handed' pose), wearing her backwards shirt and a small smile he probably can't even see. "Mornin', Dip," she whispers a tad too cheerfully.

"Hey..." Dipper groggily props himself up on his hands. "Uh, are you leaving, or...?"

"Hm? Oh, yeah. I figured it's probably a good idea to go ahead and uh... *skee*-daddle back on over to my room. Ya know. Just in case." She rubs her arm.

He doesn't respond right away, and she hears him shift a little on the bed, one of his hands discreetly bunching more of the sheets towards his waist. "It's still pretty early... I was gonna wake you up a while before Mom and Dad get up. If that's what you're worried about," Dipper offers hesitantly, sounding significantly more awake.

She shrugs, trying to cook up an air of nonchalance, her heart racing faster and faster. "Eh. I'm already wide awake, so. Might as well just... do it now."

"Oh. Yeah, gotcha."

He goes quiet, and Mabel throws herself into twiddling her thumbs, wondering if this is her cue to leave. It's too dark to really make out the expression on his face. Just as she's on the verge of 'casually' announcing her official farewell, Dipper breaks the silence.

"Mabel, are we... are we okay?"

His voice comes out small, fearful, unnervingly reminiscent of just a few hours ago when he'd tried to apologize to her... right before she'd kissed him. It makes Mabel feel about a foot tall, because this is definitely the part where she's supposed to walk back over to the bed, tenderly lean over him and hug or kiss him in reassurance, smooth his crazy morning bangs to one side of his forehead and tell him that it's okay, everything is fine—she knows it, she can feel it in her bones.

But she doesn't.

"Yeah, Dipper. We're really okay," Mabel says from her spot frozen on the carpet a few feet away, hoping her tone sounds as comforting as she's aiming for it to be and not trembly at all.

More silence. Then she can see Dipper nodding stiffly as he pulls up the sheets clutched in his hand a tiny bit more. "Okay... night, Mabel."

"Night, Dip," she replies automatically, turning to finish her trek out.

"... Love you," she hears him mumble just as she's slipping her way out his bedroom door, the sort-of-forlorn, sort-of-awkward sounding words flying over to her like jungle blow darts and stabbing her in the back, each of them tiny pricks of guilt.

"Loveyoutoobro," Mabel whispers over her shoulder in a stumbling heap, never actually looking back as she carefully but quickly shuts the door behind her. Sweat beads on her forehead. She—she had to shut it fast, or else it would've creaked. Right? She's *not* acting weird. She's not.

After a quick trip to the bathroom and what seems like a lifetime of tiptoeing, Mabel finally falls back into her own bed, the glow from a string of ice cream cone lights softly illuminating the room. She supposes she should be able to feel some sense of relief now, but her bed feels cold, colder than usual. She tosses and turns under the covers, trying to get

comfortable, blankly registering the faint soreness between her thighs all over again. Her cheeks heat up as the quiet stillness of her bedroom allows those thoughts to creep out, the ones that leave her feeling flustered, and confused, and terrified, and... confused.

It's good thing today is Saturday, because it's a long time before sleep finds her.

"Mabel, you're still in bed? It's almost noon! Up, up!"

"*Nnm...?*"

Consciousness flows back into Mabel's body at the sound of her much-too-cheerful-right-now mother bustling around her room. One of her eyelids crack open only to quickly shut again, blinded by the light streaming in through the newly opened curtains, the brightness drowning out the ice cream cones.

"Moooom, *whyyy*..." the cranky teenager whines, rolling her face into the pillow.

Mom ignores her cranky tone and keeps talking, walking around and tossing the few sweaters and dresses and t-shirts sprawled on the floor into the laundry basket tucked under her arm, "—I mean it doesn't surprise me that your brother's still in bed, but since when are you such a late sleeper?"

At the mention of Dipper, Mabel instantly tenses, realizing that the pit in her stomach she'd fallen asleep with is still very much there. Color creeps up her neck and into her cheeks, her heartbeat picking up speed as she presses her face against her pillow, trying to escape the shaky but heartfelt *'I love you'* echoing relentlessly in her ears.

"Come on, get up and get dressed, kiddo. You have a *visitor* downstairs." Her mother singsongs and winks at her in the most embarrassing way, and Mabel jerks up in bed, blankets flying, the ominous pit in her stomach growing dangerously quickly.

"Whuh? Who?"

"Hmm. Who do you think?" Mom shoots her a cheeky grin and Mabel feels like she might hyperventilate.

Oh no.

Not now. She can't do this right now, please not now.

Her mother finishes collecting laundry and heads out the doorway, grabbing the knob on her way out. "Up and at 'em hon! Come on, Aiden's already been waiting down there awhile. Go save the poor kid before your dad attempts to bond."

Mom laughs as she shuts the door behind her, leaving Mabel sitting up stiffly in bed. She turns her head towards the mirror over her dresser, and her petrified reflection stares back at her.

Hair. Make up. Cute outfit. All the usual essentials for boyfriend hang outs have to be done up quickly, since he's already here. (*Why, why is he here at all?!*) Her hands are a little shaky as she fits an orange carnation headband—the finishing touch—on her head. She lets her arms flop to her sides, staring blankly into the mirror.

Alright. It's gonna be fine. It's only her boyfriend. She saw him just last night. There's no reason for her to be so over-the-top freaked out right now.

Except there so friggin is, because after you came home from your date with Aiden you waltzed over and cheated the mother of all cheats on him with—!

Mabel quickly drops the eyes of her reflection and marches from her room, determined to act natural.

But it feels like something out of a nightmare, seeing Aiden standing at the bottom of the stairs near the front door, smiling brightly at her. A homemade sign with 'Prom?' spelled out in letters made out hand-drawn cartoon pigs in one hand, a colorful bouquet of daisies in the other, not a hair out of place. His blue eyes sparkling, so obviously happy to see her. The sight is sickeningly adorable. Literally. There is so much churning going on in her stomach right now, it feels like she might be sick at any moment.

A big smile appears on her face halfway down the steps, cheerful greetings prancing of her stupid mouth. Meanwhile, the real Mabel is trapped behind the screen of her own eyes, pulling her hair and wailing in horror, watching the events of her suddenly crazy life play out like a movie she has no control over.

Aiden's timing seriously *does* feel like something out of a bad movie—showing up at her house the morning after probably *the* most intense and confusing night of her life, holding flowers out to her, smoothly asking if she'd be so kind as to accompany him to prom. Doing everything she ever wanted from him, five days ago at least.

Now, Mabel hesitates. Her smile faltering ever so slightly. She brings the daisies to her nose and pretends to care a lot about how good they smell, if only to buy herself a smidge more time before she has to give an answer.

The word 'no' is the only thing coming to mind, repeating over and over like scrolling text in her brain.

... But really, how could she say no right now, right to his face? He's her boyfriend. They've been happily dating for over two months now. *Everyone* expects them to go together. All her friends... her parents, who love Aiden and are probably one room over listening in on the cutesy exchange with amused smiles. Certainly Aiden himself, sweet, kind, considerate Aiden, who doesn't have any reason to believe he'd be turned down when asking his girlfriend to prom. She has every reason to say yes.

... Except for that whole issue of losing it to her brother last night.

For the first time since she woke up that morning, Mabel allows herself to think of Dipper, of his scruffy chin, of his voice, of his easy going smile. Of his hands and lips and body all over her, blatantly overriding logic, making her feel things, terrifying, crazy, *wonderful* things. She pictures him now, probably asleep and curled up in bed, thick curly hair sticking up every which way, maybe drooling into his pillow, blissfully unaware of what's going on one floor below him.

Then the rumination train escalates to max power and Mabel is being pelted with thought after thought of her brother as a baby and a kid and a teenager, always right alongside her, always right *there*. She's thinking of how he *still* never really lets her win at checkers-chess-uno-whatever like a smarty-pants butthead, of those intricate pretend games they would play in the woods behind their Grandma's house (where he was Indiana Jones and she was a Sailor Scout), of the way he sounds through the wall of her room when he sings off-key BABBA songs in the shower. Of the huge scar he has on his elbow from crashing his bike into a mailbox at full speed, which only happened because he'd been hollering over his shoulder to where *she* was pedaling figure-eights in the middle of the road on *her* bike, frantically trying to warn her about the car coming from the other direction—and then there's that other jagged scar he has on his knee from freakin' leaping into a giant robot to rescue her from an insane nine-year-old—

Mabel's eyes glaze over as she stares down those daisy petals.

—Of the super sweet that-guy's-a-jerk-and-you're-awesome themed Valentine he made for her in seventh grade after she'd been crying over getting rejected by her crush. Of the way he'll let her lay down in his lap so she can sleep on long car or bus trips, one of his hands holding a book, the other absentmindedly stroking through her hair as he reads. The way he mutters under his breath as his eyebrows furrow and his pen clicks when he's thinking really hard about something, the way his brown eyes will light up like the dang sun when he inevitably figures the something out. Of how he always seems to be *right* there when she needs him, for anything, no matter what, bickering and tears and laughter and a thousand conversations about nothing and everything echoing in her ears, because they're *twins*, that's what they've always been, and that's what twins *do*, they love one another and do everything together and stick by each other through thick and thin, but sex is definitely not supposed to be included in that blanket-term 'everything' that twins do together, oh god oh god it's just *not* and at the end of the day nothing is going to change the fact that Dipper is her brother, her brother, *her brother*—

—And Mabel's brain seems to short out, shut down.

"...Mabel?" Aiden's careful voice startles her, triggering words to come pouring out of her mouth.

"Yyyes. Yeah! Y-yeah, of course, I'd love to—aww, babe this is so sweet, thank you—" Like a puppet on strings, Mabel feels her numb arms reach out for the relieved boy in front of her, and she cups his face, pulling it to hers. Aiden drops the sign, his hands coming to rest on her waist. She does her best to put a little enthusiasm into the kiss, even though she feels nothing but icky, icky, icky.

After a few seconds they break apart, a plastic smile etched on Mabel's face, a genuine one on her boyfriend's.

And even though in the moment she feels more grossly icky than she's ever felt before in her life, the nightmare of this morning has barely begun, apparently.

It starts with prickling on the back of her neck, followed by a sinking stomach when she realizes that the prickling is actually the feeling of someone watching her. Aiden is stroking his hands up her back and leaning in again when she jerks her head around, seeking out the source. Her boyfriend's lips land on her cheek just as Mabel makes excruciatingly acute eye contact with Dipper, who is standing at the top of the stairs, arms limp at his sides, plainly stricken with disbelief.



The seconds seem to tick by slowly as she takes him in, an all-powerful feeling of dread seeping through her body, crippling her. She wants to throw up and maybe burst into tears at the betrayed, utterly crushed look in her brother's eyes, but she can't bring herself to look away. How long Dipper has been standing there like that, there's no way to know for sure, but something is telling her that it was long enough. And he doesn't say a word, but she knows him so well, it's almost as if she can hear him yelling the questions she's certain he's thinking down at her anyway.

How could you? Did last night even mean anything to you at all? What did I do wrong? I thought we were... I thought you...

Time speeds up again as an equally stricken Mabel watches her twin unfreeze—his features crumbled and glaring, his hands balled up into fists—and disappear from sight. She flinches when the sound of a door slamming shut clatters through the house a second later.

No. No. No.

Aiden jumps a little at the sound, pulling away from her cheek. "Jeez, what's with the door slammage? ... Hey, you alright Mabe?"

No, her brain wails, her eyes still glued to the empty spot at the top of the stairs. No, I think I just did something really really not cool and bad and unfixable, so no no no no HECK no I am not alright!

She blinks. "... Um. What? Yeah! I'm fine, I just—ahh, zoned out for a sec there."

Aiden raises his eyebrow and chuckles, smoothly streamlining into telling her all about the wacky guy on the phone when he called to make limo reservations, not even blinking an eye at the dull clatter that rumbles from upstairs in the middle of his story... like something being hurled against a wall and then crashing to the ground, maybe. Mabel swallows hard, all her concentration now dedicated to keeping a smile in place, barely any energy left over to actually listen to the lighthearted words that are being said.

Her boyfriend's hands feel like weights on either side of her waist, but they're nowhere near as heavy as the one in her chest.

"*Ooh!* May-may, you should totally try this one on, it'd look amazing on you." Mabel glances over to the redheaded girl one clothing rack over from her, who's holding up a short, plain-looking (to Mabel at least) black dress.

"Ehhh," she responds, waving her hand in a 'so-so' gesture. "I don't think that one's very me. And this is prom! I gotta make... a statement." She gazes dramatically into the distance, brown eyes narrowed into a mock-serious expression.

Jenna walks over to where Mabel is standing in the bustling department store, folding her arms. "You never try on anything I pick out for you."

"Aw, don't take it personally, Jen. You know how it goes. Got an image to uphold, n' all that jazz. A certain... *Mabel-y flairrrr*, if you will. Not many people can comprehend the vastness of its standards." Mabel laughs and wiggles her fingers, prompting Jenna to raise an eyebrow at her.

"Yeeeah. So I've heard," she drawls, rolling her eyes and turning her attention to her phone.

Mabel just smiles, shrugging off the comment and turning back to the rack. She's used to style criticisms, even from some of her friends. And Jenna is probably the most judgmental and overbearing of all Mabel's friends, which is saying something, because she's got a lot of them. Jenna had insisted that the two of them go prom dress shopping together. Prom's only a little over a month away, and if they don't get a jump on things now all the good ones will be picked over. It's not like Mabel could refuse her, since Jenna technically *is* the one who introduced her to Aiden earlier that semester.

"Oooh, this one's pretty fabulous," Mabel pulls out a ocean-blue bejeweled dress from between the masses of satin and chiffon and holds it up for Jenna to see. The short redhead glances up from typing out a message on her phone and grimaces.

“Gag me,” Jenna says, returning to her task of rapidly tapping her thumbs against a screen. “Seriously girl, just because people *can* cover a dress in tacky sequins and shit, doesn’t mean they should.”

“Pfff,” Mabel huffs, trying not to let on how offended she is at the blasphemous comment, “well I for one beg to differ.”

Still, the dress goes back on the rack.

“Sooo. Prom,” Jenna says, her voice uncharacteristically light and airy as she drops her phone in her purse and joins Mabel in the search for the perfect dress.

“Prommmm,” Mabel bobs her head in distracted agreement, her eye now on a short, poofy blue number.

“Usually to be followed up by prom *night*.”

“True facts, girlfriend.”

“Aaaand you know what they say about prom night...”

Mabel grins. “That the school sponsored after-prom is always lame?”

Jenna scoffs and smiles, throwing down the folds of a light pink satin hem, digging out her buzzing phone again. “Oh please Mabel, don’t pretend like you don’t know what I’m about to ask you.”

“Alrightalrightalright. But say we hypothetically pretended for a second that I didn’t, what then.”

Jenna casually slides a dress back and forth along the rack, her blue eyes skimming over her latest text. “You gonna let Aiden get somewhere with you or what?”

Mabel goes bright red, fumbling with the several prom dress selections draped over her arms. “Oh! Oh, *that*, haha. Uh, to be honest I haven’t really—” A dress slips from her hands and she quickly drops to the floor to pick it up.

Oh, fudge. This isn’t good. Because she’s acting weird and guilty (which isn’t her fault, she *is* weird and very, very guilty) and Jenna, self-proclaimed gossip queen, is going to pick up on this fact in about three, two—

“*Unless*.” Jenna’s eyes light up at the prospect of being in-the-know about something new and she pockets her phone. “Unless you already have!”

It’s times like these when Mabel wishes she was a better liar. Okay not *liar* in this case, but... more like secret keeper. “Have what?” She asks weakly, avoiding her friend’s overbearing blue stare, trying to laugh it all off with an innocent smile that’s probably entirely shifty.

“Oh my *god!*” Jenna screeches, and several nearby shoppers turn their heads in the girls’ direction. “You dirty little sneak, you guys totally did it didn’t you! How could you not tell me you’re not a virgin anymore!”

Mabel’s eyes widen and she’s feeling more than a little like a deer in headlights. *Well*, she thinks begrudgingly, *part of that statement’s true, anyway*. She turns redder (if that’s at all possible), frozen and unresponsive. Jenna’s not having any of it.

“Uh, hello! Spill already, before I have to beat it out of you! When did it happen, how did it happen, and most importantly,” Jenna giggles conspiratorially under her breath, “was it actually any good?”

Mabel’s skin has now heated up to temperatures of epic proportions while her lips purse tightly together, her eyes now on her shoes. *Sure, Jen. Let me regale to you the wondrous tale of how I randomly got it on with my twin bro the other night. Shan’t that be fantastic!* Mabel tries to keep herself from grimacing, the sights and sounds and smells of this dumb ol’ department store suddenly making her feel sick. Oh god. Oh god, oh god. She has to fight the urge to cover her face with her hands.

What happened that night was... was... well, she hasn’t really figured it out yet. And this girl is probably one of the last people she’d want to talk about it with, even if she *could* talk about it, even if it *would* be in code, an extra messed-up code where her brother is replaced by a boyfriend whose presence in her life has become the equivalent of deflated soufflé. Soufflé that she often has a hard time looking in the eye. Which is ironic, since she’s been making a point to spend more and more time with the guy. Anything to not be at home, where she lives across the hall from someone who doesn’t seem to want anything to do with her anymore.

“Uhm, sorry to disappoint,” Mabel finally answers, “but we haven’t done anything like that.”

It’s certainly not a lie. Sometimes she can barely bring herself to even kiss Aiden when he leans expectantly towards her lips; the thought of doing anything more than that with him makes her feel sick to her stomach.

“Oh, bullshit,” Jenna says, narrowing her eyes, that busybody smile still in place. “You really expect me to believe that? Are you not *aware* of how red your face is right now?”

“Well it’s the truth, so take it or leave it.” Mabel suddenly feels very done talking to Jenna. “I’m gonna go try these on,” she says curtly, hefting the dresses over to one arm before turning on her foot and fast walking away, leaving Jenna standing alone between the racks. She’ll pay for that one later, but right now she doesn’t give a crap.

Finding the nearest dressing room, Mabel strides over to the first stall she sees and shuts the door behind her just as a choked sob escapes her lips. Luckily all the other stalls looked empty, because another one bubbles up right after that.

She lets the dresses fall from her arms and hit the ground in a heap, turning towards the full length mirror, wiping at her teary red eyes and trying to get her breathing under control. She stares at her reflection, noting her heaving shoulders, her smeared make up, the faint purple rings under her eyes.

You gotta calm down, Mabel. You can't cry here, so just caaalmm on down.

Somehow managing to get her shoulders to go still again, Mabel shudders out a sigh, sinking down along the wall until she's sitting on the carpet, chin resting on her knees.

It's getting to her. It's only been a few days, but it's really, really getting to her. The Dipper shutting her out thing.

When she thinks about it, it's a truly difficult feat when they live in the same house, go to the same school, share a vehicle between them, along with classes and parents and a few friends. But *boy*, Mabel thinks, her eyes welling up again, has he been doing a good job of it anyway. A dang good job, considering he hasn't said a word to her or even *looked* at her once since Saturday.

And here she thought the way they'd been avoiding each other last week, after they'd only kissed, was bad; *this* is taking it to a whole new level of pain and awkwardness. Dipper has straight up made himself disappear from her life. Abracadabra, poof. Gone. She barely ever sees him come out of his room. His door is always locked. He's been riding to and from school this week with their neighbor friend, leaving her to drive their van alone. He ignored the one and only text she had the courage to send him—all it said was



dipper im so sorry can we please
talk

and all she'd gotten in response were those tiny gray letters that said '*read at 12:31 am,*' and she didn't attempt any more texts after that.

The few times they've crossed paths at home or at school, Dipper kept his head down and kept on walkin' without so much as a glance her way. He refuses to come down and eat dinner with the family no matter how much Mom furiously raps on his locked bedroom door, and last night, when her parents finally sat her down and asked her all worried-like if she knew what was going on with Dipper, and she had to lie *right* to their faces... god, Mabel has no idea how she got through that conversation without breaking down into loud blubbery whale tears, much less how she managed to come across as convincing liar for once. Man, did she feel horrible-gross about that one.

Not nearly as horrible-gross as she feels about the case of the disappearing Dip, though. Every day that passes without speaking to him, with him avoiding her as if he just can't bear to be in her presence, is like a chip away from her heart with an especially pointy ice pick. It *hurts*. It feels so wrong and unnatural. But she's too ashamed of how things went down that dreaded morning after to put her foot down and try to end the madness.

Oh god... Mabel hugs her knees to her chest, her face wilting, remembering. That first evening, when the avoiding was just beginning, she'd accidentally bumped into Dipper coming out of his room as she headed for the stairs. His head was down like he was trying to hide it, but she could still see his puffy, reddened eyes... his damp cheeks, his runny nose, his blotchy, exhausted face. Like, *that* was unmistakably the face of someone who'd just spent a looong time in tearsville. Mabel's heart had leapt into her throat so savagely that she felt like she might choke on it. By the time she opened her mouth to say something, *anything*, Dipper had already strode into the bathroom across the hall and quickly shut the door behind him.

That was the moment her heart had snapped in two. The thought of her brother crying like that over something *she'd* done... it *easily* made her start to cry, and she never actually made it downstairs—instead she spent the next hour sniffing into a pillow, shedding miserable tears for this new, ugly crack in their relationship, one that felt impossible to fix. Then shedding even *more* tears thanks to that scary, debilitating feeling that no matter what she does next, it'll still be the wrong thing.

Now, sitting on the floor of an empty dressing room, a few tears escape and roll their way down Mabel's cheeks. She'd taken so much care not to break Dipper's heart that night. And then, a measly few hours later, ended up smashing it to smithereens anyway.

It was an accident, she hadn't meant for him to see...

Dang it, a-all she'd done was kiss her boyfriend!

Ugh... as if it was really that simple. This argument has played out in her head about a zillion times already.

Mabel's not sure how much longer she can take this. Even if she still doesn't really know how to process what happened between them Friday night, Dipper is still her twin bro, and her best friend, and being completely shut out like this hurts so *badly*. It feels like she's lost him, even though he's still right down the hall.

But she's not completely blameless. It's not like she's gone out of her way to seek him out and try to fix things, either, not since that one super lame apology text. She's... afraid of him. Of what he must be thinking about her now (*oh god he hates her he hates her doesn't he*). And she hates herself for allowing that fear to get to her, because Dipper deserves so much more than that, but... how she'd left things between them... and that *look on his face*... she can't face it. It kills her.

Mabel doesn't know what else to do other than leave him be. If Dipper doesn't want to see her, or talk to her, or acknowledge she exists, then she won't make him.

No matter how much her heart is aching.

Her phone buzzes inside her cat-shaped bag, and she wearily pulls it out to see a text from Jenna, demanding where she is.

Great. Mabel sniffs and wipes at her eyes. Back into the world of friends and boyfriends and prom it is, then.

In the end, four whole days pass before Dipper says a word to her. On day five Mabel looks up from her spot on the bed where she's listening to music and knitting a tea cozy, and there he is standing in her open doorway, gingerly giving the frame a few weak knocks.

"Dipper," is all she can find it in herself to say, her knitting needles going still in her hands.

"Hey, Mabel." Dipper takes a few steps inside, leaving the door open behind him. It's late afternoon and their parents are still at work, so nobody is home but the two of them. His hands are deep in his pockets, and he's looking in her direction, but not quite looking *at* her.

Like he's afraid to, or something.

Her throat feels tight. She tries to remember what she'd planned on saying to her brother whenever he decided to talk to her again, but now that the moment's here, words are escaping her. She feels like a robot, trapped inside her own body, because all she wants to do is hug him, comfort him, (kiss him? No.), mess up his hair and tell him dumb yo mama jokes until that dejected look on his face is long gone and he's smiling and laughing again—but her limbs won't move from the stupid bed.

Ugh, what *is* this robot phenomenon that keeps happening? What the heck is wrong with her?

"I—"

"I'm—"

They start and stop at the same time, words left hanging in the air, timid looks on both their faces. Mabel has never felt *this* tense around her brother before, and she doesn't like it. Not one bit.

"Sorry. You first."

Dipper hesitates, using one hand to scratch at his jaw before returning it to the safety of his pocket. "I uh. . . I wanted to apologize for the way I've been treating you. It wasn't cool of me, and you didn't deserve any of it, and I'm sorry."

The image of Dipper's crestfallen face at the top of the stairs pops into Mabel's brain and she starts to shake her head, slowly at first, but then gathering speed. Didn't *deserve* any of it? She begs to differ! She opens her mouth to voice this aloud, but the words die in her throat when Dipper holds up a halting hand.

“Please, just, hear me out for a sec. I’ve um... I’ve been doing a lot of thinking. And—”

He pauses, looking torn, and miserable, and Mabel almost forgets to breathe, trying to prepare herself for whatever he could be about to say.

“I can see now that... I kinda. Um. May have gotten a little ahead of myself, there.” He holds a hand out in front of him, starting to tick down fingers one by one. “And I’m sorry for pushing all of that on you out of nowhere, and confusing you, and assuming things... a lot of things... man...”

He blushes, scrubbing a thumb and index finger over his eyes, shaking his head to himself. “Like looking back on everything that happened and how I went about it, it wasn’t fair of me to assume... like, *anything*, at all, a-and—” His hand drops away as he forces himself to look her in the eye. “I’m so sorry, Mabel, I swear to god, I *never* meant to make you feel like you had to—to like—” Dipper’s face sours and he cuts off mid-sentence, looking humiliated and completely disgusted with himself, and dear god, she hates this, she hates this so much, “...I-I’m so sorry I took it that far, and messed with your head in the most twisted fucking way and—dragged you into this without actually knowing if you even *wanted*... any of it. Oh my god, I mean,” he laughs hollowly and covers his face with his hands, muffling his voice for a second, “honestly, who would?”

His words become a little less frantic, returning to being just plain ashamed. “I... I don’t know. I guess I,” his blush spreads like cherry-red wildfire to the tips of his ears, “I spent so long wanting something like that to happen that... I was seeing what I wanted to see, I guess. I-I’m fucked in the head, I know that... and I got caught up in the moment, and... I know that’s not an excuse. I just. I screwed up, Mabel. And I’m so, so, sorry.”

He looks at her, his eyes huge and pleading. Mabel blinks at him, feeling paralyzed. Dipper is giving her an out. And she’s too terrified to do anything but numbly take it.

“... Um, I guess I did too, with the moment, and the getting caught up in it, ‘n junk... I’m really sorry too, Dipper,” she says, her voice trailing off to barely above a whisper. She says all of that because it felt like that’s what he was expecting her to say, so that’s all she *could* think to say. But she’s not sure if it’s one-hundred-percent true, and all this guilt and doubt and could-be lies are starting to gnaw away at her insides.

Dipper is still looking straight into her eyes, like he doesn’t want to be but won’t allow himself to look away. All she can do is stare helplessly back at him, her face as flushed as his. He takes in a breath.

“I’ve been a really shitty brother to you, and I get that now.”

Mabel’s heart skips a beat in a painful way as it finally dawns on her that he’s pinning this whole mess on himself. All of it.

“No, Dip, you haven’t—”

Dipper shakes his head, eyes dropping hers as he cuts her off, his voice thick. “Mabel, *stop*, you don’t have to—” His sentence breaks off with a soft, hoarse sound. He swallows. “You don’t need to spare my feelings or whatever, okay? I know that this is. . . I mean, this is fucked up. We don’t have to pretend it isn’t. But you have to know that I—like I know the damage is already done but seriously, I *never*—” His face crumbles a little as he drops his forehead against his hand. “God,” his voice cracks on the word, “I never meant to hurt you, Mabel. I’m so sorry I did this to us. I wish I could take it all back, but I can’t. I just. . . I-I hope you can forgive me someday.”

Dipper stops talking, blinking rapidly and trying to subtly clear the frog in his throat. Mabel has *no* idea what to say to any of that. She’s heard enough to figure out what he’s implying and she’s still acting like a frozen, useless robot of a sister instead of saying anything comforting. She feels completely disgusting, so, so *rotten*.

Say something. *Say something!*

Her voice shakes hard as she speaks, her eyes welling up, “Dipper, no. It’s not. . . i-it’s not like that, you didn’t. . .”

The cracked, weak words don’t form into sentences quickly enough and Dipper seems to take that as an affirmation for something, shaking his head grimly. “Seriously. . . you don’t have to. It’s okay. I mean it’s not *okay*, but. All I—all I want is for things to go back to normal, y-you know? If, uh, you’re okay with that. I’ve been thinking about it, and maybe if we. . . like if we want it enough, and put in the effort to make things feel normal, maybe we could get back to the way it was. Like, eventually?”

He doesn’t sound at all like he really believes that, and Mabel is trying really, really hard not to cry.

“But there’s not gonna be anymore weird stuff, Mabel. You don’t have to worry, I promise you I’m not—” his eyes dart to the floor, voice dropping to a mumble, “gonna try anything, or. . . anything. Ever again. Like that’s totally over, I’m done, I swear.” Dipper raises his hands in front of his chest in surrender as he forces out the words in a rush, while Mabel nods her head quickly and stares down a random spot of wall like her life depends on it—*agh* this is the most awkward and depressing conversation of her life, probably. “But I might. . . um, need a little time. To get my shit together, and. . . yeah.”

The mechanical tone of Dipper’s voice actually scares her. She wants to cry out, wrap him up in a big bear hug and proclaim that he is to never speak in that dead robot voice in her presence ever again—but she’s still trapped in her own robot body. And all her body decides to do is nod and squeak out, “Yeah, that’s fine. Sure.”

Dipper nods gratefully and clears his throat again, lifting his arm to scratch the back of his neck, and Mabel has to rip her eyes away from the tiniest peek of boxers and happy trail she gets when his t-shirt rides up a little past his jeans. *Stop looking at him like that, Mabel. It is not the time. It’ll never ever be the time, because you made your choice and now you gotta stick with it.*

She refuses to toy with Dipper's heart a second longer. She had it for a second there, and *majorly* faked it up, and you don't get second chances when situations are this weird and delicate and brother-sister relationships are on the line. You just don't.

His arm drops down, his gaze shifting to the side before locking back on hers. "So, do you think, um. . . are we cool, for now?"

Dipper steps toward her, the thinnest of smiles on his lips, hesitantly extending his fist. At first Mabel just stares at it, because none of this feels *cool* at all.

"... Yeah, we're cool, Dip." Shooting her brother a tiny smile in return, she bumps the waiting fist with her own.

Dipper apologized, but things don't go back to normal. Not that that really surprises her, since nothing about the root of their problem was actually fixed (*or can ever be fixed?* No, no Mabel, *you can't think that way*), but. . .

Things are different now, between her and her brother.

He's not blatantly going out of his way to avoid her anymore, which is a relief. But their conversations are short-lived and halted. Banter, if any, doesn't feel totally natural. They certainly don't bring up what happened as a rule, not since that one sad-'n-awk convo. They don't spend much time together at all, really. And he never touches her anymore, ever. Not even accidentally. No more hand grasps, hugs, couch cuddles, playful headlocks, twin secret handshakes. . . but to be fair, she hasn't made any attempts to touch him either.

In the beginning, being deliberately alone together at all seemed out of the question, and the only time they ever really were was in their van on the way to and from school. Which was okay. . . but then Aiden started picking her up for school in the mornings since her house is pretty close to his, while Dipper started throwing himself into after school clubs he previously didn't seem to be as invested in, so that took care of that.

With each day that passes, Dipper starts to seem the tiniest bit more open to being around her, and it gets a little better. But not by much.

Acting like everything's a-okay around the 'rents appears to be an unspoken agreement between them. Mabel finds herself looking forward to family dinners more. At least she gets to talk to him some in a way that she can almost, if only for a few minutes, pretend that they've accomplished their goal and things are as easy going as they used to be.

A week goes by that is severely lacking in her twin, and then another.

She doesn't mean for it to go on so long, but it does. And at this point she doesn't know how to go about fixing it. The fact that it's been going on long enough to form into habit scares the bejesus out of her, makes her want to kick stuff and yell and sink to her

knees and cry because above everything, she *misses* him. She's still not sure what exactly she... uh, *feels* for him, or whatever (She's not. She's really not!). But she misses her brother.

God, does she miss that nerd. So much that a lot of times it's hard to think of anything else.

But, Mabel keeps reminding herself, she made a choice—even if it is a choice that she's been going over in her head bleventeen times a day ever since. She picked Aiden, not Dipper. She went with super-hunky dirty-blond soccer-playing normalcy, she chose her... gh, um... dream boy. And when it comes to Dipper... well, Mabel knows what being rejected feels like, she's well aware of how much it royally sucks. In this hairy situation it's gotta feel, like, next-level horrible and sucky. She really tries not to dwell on that part too much, because it makes her want to disappear into guilt-and-shame-sweatertown forevermore. Jeez, it... yeah. It would *not* be fair of her to push any of Dipper's boundaries right now. Not when he said he needed time.

That's what she keeps telling herself, to try and make it easier to deal with all the hurt she's feeling and the double dose of hurt he's got to be feeling.

Dipper will come around. He just needs time.

The weeks continue to trudge by, and before she knows it, Mabel is standing in her room in front of a mirror, all dolled up in her full skirted, pink and purple prom dress. Hair and nails and fancy make-up done, silver heels strapped to her feet.

It's prom night, and when Aiden rings her doorbell in a matter of minutes, they'll take pictures here, drive to a friend's and take *more* pictures, go out to a schmancy-pants restaurant with a huge group of their coupled-up friends, head out to the dance, and then after that throw down at Britney Ayers' exclusive, overnight, widely anticipated, word-on-the-street-is-there-will-be-lots-of-alcohol-and-minimal-supervision after party. It sounds like a great time, and really, she'd love to be more excited about it, but...

Mabel frowns into the mirror, arms raised above her head to stick tiny flowers pins in her intricately twisted bun. Trying not to think about what she's of course going to end up thinking about anyway.

...Dipper isn't going to prom. A few days ago she overheard Mom in the kitchen prying him for why he didn't want to go, and all he said was that prom was overrated and there was no one he wanted to go with anyway, maybe next year. Then he retreated to his room (aka his hermit cave) per the norm, passing by where she'd been sitting in the living room working on further bedazzling her prom dress. He didn't say anything and didn't look at her.

She felt the usual dull stab to the gut, even though things have slowly but steadily gotten better between the two of them... they still don't hang out like they used to, but there have been some signs that maybe things *do* actually have a shot at getting close to the normalcy that once was, which a month ago felt impossible.

Signs, like him spending a little less time in the cave of his room when they're both home. She's seeing more of him. He'll smile at things she says when they talk here and there around the house or in the car or in English. Sometimes they joke around and the laughter is genuine, and she'll get a taste of the old Mystery Twins, how easy it used to be, which makes her long for them back that much more. He's starting to do brother things again, like cut her off for the bathroom in the mornings and burp loudly in front of her without apology and poke fun at Dad's mustache with her when a piece of food gets stuck in it. He can look her in the eye again when he talks. And for the most part he has stopped acting so dang afraid of her.

Things are looking up, and she's happy about that, like, really, really happy! She really is, it's just...

Uhhhm...

Lately her brain has been pestering her with this sort of... well, *nagging* inkling that... maybe she miiiight not be as confused about her feelings for Dipper as she used to be.

For one thing, he always seems to be on her mind. He's been making wayyy more appearances in her dreams at night, appearances she would really rather not elaborate on, and when she's awake she catches herself thinking about him during class, or in the shower, or while working on an art project, or when she's with her friends, or with Aiden... blhhh, everywhere! She'll wonder what he's doing. What he might be thinking about right that second. Half of this can be explained away by the fact that she's missing him, deeply nostalgic for the way their friendship used to be, but that sure doesn't explain the part where she goes on to wonder if (hope) he's thinking about her, too. It sure as *heck* doesn't explain her zoning out in Spanish and daydreaming a scenario where her fingers are laced with Dipper's, and he's leaning over and kissing her cheek, all sweet and tender and careful like he did that one time, then stroking her hair behind her ear and bending to kiss her neck just as tenderly and she doesn't learn any Spanish that day, *at all*.

Sometimes, when she looks at Dipper, Mabel will find her eyes flicking down to his mouth, and a sudden, powerful impulse to yank him in by the shoulders and kiss his face all *up* will course through her veins. It's *awkward*—especially since it happens at really weird, random times, like him eating cereal and watching TV in sweatpants that haven't been washed in way too long, or taking an annoying amount of time to make sure the rear-view mirror is adjusted juuust perfectly right before he drives them to school, or boredly standing in front of the bathroom mirror as he washes out his toothbrush, minding his own business—but she's always able to shake it off, keep her face straight, and pretend the random oh-crap-I think-I-wanna-besmooch-my-bro urges aren't happening.

But *other* times when she looks at Dipper, her super-jerk brain will out of *nowhere* decide to vividly recall the scrunched-up face he made and the choked moans he'd shuddered out when he... uh... *finished* inside her. During *those* times her entire body will turn a shade of pink, an embarrassing throb no-one-frickin-invited making itself known between her legs, and she'll find whatever excuse she can to duck out of his presence. Because uh, *hello!* She's supposed to be forgetting about that! Huge no-no thought! Not cool brain, not cool. In the end Mabel is assaulted with more guilt as she desperately tries to banish the intrusive inappropriate-Dipper-thoughts and get her body temperature under control.

Then there are those few times late at night in her bed, when she doesn't even care about making an effort to forget... and when her head is rolled back into her pillow, her teeth digging into her lip and her fingers real busy beneath her blanket, erm... well, it's definitely not Aiden she's picturing on top of her, kissing her neck, curling her toes, pushing her over the edge. *That's* for sure. Ugh. There was one night where she got a little too into the fantasy-that-must-not-be-named and accidentally moaned his name, consequently slapping a hand over her mouth, her face burning, her mind all kinds of paranoid that someone had heard her. So paranoid that she spent the next fifteen minutes laying there stock-still, hardly daring to breathe, her thighs pressed tightly together.

Hooo boy. She's gotten herself into some majorly hot and unexpected water, that much is obvious.

But even if all this stuff *does* mean that she's feelin' some abnormal feels for her brother (and she's *not*. She *only* uses him for inspo during Mabel-time because he's the only guy she's ever done that sort of R-rated shiz with and therefore that's the most authentic material she has to go off of, okay?!), then what? What good would that do anyone? Dipper made it pretty clear that he wanted things to go back to normal. And she hurt him so *badly*... so she needs to respect him enough to try, right?

And her current boyfriend is perfectly fine, and *so* sweet, and he wants to take her to prom, asked her so nicely and bought her a limo ride and flowers and... and besides, who's to say Dipper even still wants her anymore, after all that crappy drama biz they went through? Mabel frowns. *He wouldn't*. It's just not worth it. He's into normal, now. And *she* should be following his lead. Normal is the better option, normal is easy. L-wording your brother is complicated and hard and very much not normal.

... *Augh*, why can't she just want normal on her own! Why is she having to force it so hard, why is this happening *now* all of a sudden!

Mabel tries repeating the most obvious statements in her head, hoping it'll finally sink in somehow. Dipper is her brother. Not boyfriend material. Not guy who is both attractive and available. Family. Immediate family! *Brother*.

Yeah... your bro who you just so happen to have gone all the way with that one time... who made you o-face so hard you wanted to scream.

Ugh! Objection your honor, relevance! Just—no. Bad Mabel. Dipper. Is. Her. Brother. Her in-diapers-together, peed-his-pants-on-the-teeter-totter-in-kindergarten, zero-fashion-sense, bit-of-a-know-it-all, annoying-pen-clicker, nerdy-as-heck brother.

Who is also amazingly cool and smart and loyal and fun to hang out with and don't forget had that magical ability to kiss you in a way that made you forget where you were for a second!

Yeah, he is a surprisingly good kisser... Dammit, no! Dipper is her brother! Her friggin' twin brother! It's the big scary 'I'! Weird incesty biz! *What* is so hard to understand about that? She's weird, but not *that* weird. God, she can't be *that* person...

Except you can't do what you're doin' and think what you're thinking and not be that person, can you? And by that logic, you've already been that person for like... a month and a half. Boom goes the dynamite.

... Oh, *no*... could she really actually be...

Oh *come on!*

She can't be 'in *luuuuhve*' or whatever, not with Dipper. Not him, not *now!* It would be too weird, too complicated, it... it would ruin everything! They went down that road once, and it got real messy real fast. If she tries any of that funny business now, when things are so delicate, who's to say she won't lose him for good? Because, *hellooo*, Earth to Mabel! He doesn't want you like that anymore! Especially not after the gross way you shut him down!

Dipper said it himself, he wants normal. He wants a normal relationship with his sister. It's a very reasonable thing to want! And even if their current relationship isn't anywhere close to what it used to be before, at least they're making progress. It was pretty bad for a sec there, so bad she can't even think about it without wiggin' out a little. At least now they can pass each other around the house and not have the air between them turn cold... at least they can hold a conversation. At least they can laugh and smile around each other again, if only for a little bit, and have it feel genuine.

Aw, man. She can't ruin that. She *can't* lose him. No matter what, Dipper is still more important to her than... than *anyone*. And... and anyways... she has a boyfriend.

Right. A boyfriend.

Who'll be ringing the doorbell any second now, to pick her up for her first prom.

Mabel halfheartedly sticks one last flower in her hair, and slumps down to sit on her bed, hugging herself.

Hours later, she finds herself wrapped up in Aiden's arms on the dance floor, swaying back and forth along to a sappy love song with all the other couples, in a daze. And not a cutesy lover's daze. The kind of daze where her mind is on another planet and she's confused as to why she's even here. Prom night is turning out to be really anticlimactic.

Aiden catches her eye, and leans down for a kiss. Her old robot self makes an appearance, instructing her to close her eyes and pucker her lips. How magical.

If Aiden has noticed how uninterested she's been in their relationship lately, he certainly hasn't been showing it. To be fair to him, she has been doing her best not to be obvious about it.

He ends the lackluster lip-smacking, giving her that winning smile of his before holding her closer. Mabel lays her head on his shoulder, facing away from him, chewing on her lip. Meh. Kissing Dipper made stuff like that seem like sloppy grandma cheek-kiss material by comparison. Okay, that was way harsh, Aiden gets a mental apology for that one but... well, it *did*, kinda. Dip is weirdly good at it for someone who has very minimal experience with the ladies (um, as far as she knows, anyway). That might've been what made her so... two-parts-horrified-one-part-*intrigued*, the first time it happened.

A blush blooms on Mabel's cheeks.

Dipper. There he is again, poppin' up in her head, riiiiight on schedule.

She wonders what her brother is up to right now, being one of the handful of juniors in their class who didn't make an appearance at prom (which is a real shame because he actually rocks a tux—fancy!Dipper is a remarkable but rarely spotted creature). Maybe he's reading a book in the family room... pfff, that's probs some obscure nonfiction thing about known cults in America or something, Dip is such a huge nerd for weird-creepy-mysterious stuff like that. Or maybe he unearthed their dusty N-64 out of the cluttered entertainment center again to play some good ol' *Ocarina of Time*. When she got up to pee the other night she peeked downstairs and saw him playin' it at like 2 in the AM; he was kicking butt in the Water Temple and it was really hard to resist the urge to tiptoe down there, plop down next to him and watch him play (if he wrote over the save file she's kept for the last six years she'll kill him). Or maybe he's in the kitchen, sing-humming BABBA under his breath as he makes himself a PB 'n J, with grape jelly 'cuz it's his fave.

...Or he might be up in his room, laying in bed with headphones in like a sad lump. He's been known to do that lately, Mabel has noticed, when she passes by his room and his door happens to be cracked instead of shut. Which is not often.

She pictures him lying there on his back, staring at the ceiling, all alone, by himself...

There's a pang in her chest.

Dipper seems so down all the time now. Mopey, lethargic, quiet... yeah, he's always been the more moody, I-don't-know-how-to-deal-with-human-emotions-like-a-normal-person one of the two of them, especially since they hit their teen years, but the rift between them has taken Dipper's lows to a whole new level.

Man. She should really be doing more to fix that. She's his bubbly optimist-to-his-pessimist twin, it's been her job to turn that anxious frown upside-down since they were chubby lil' babies figuring out how *to* smile. And she's really been failing at her job lately.

And what's been stopping her? Why has she settled into the bare minimum? Why hasn't she busted inside his room in full clown gear yet, doing the sprinkler dance and shooting him with a Nyarf gun? Why hasn't she offered him a cheesy monster movie marathon, something that has a history of cheering up his sour moods in no time flat? Why hasn't she at least pulled him aside, let him know that no matter what, she's still here for him, that she'll always be his sister?

He might yell at me to leave him alone. He might turn me away.

Yeah, okay, he might, but since when has the possibility of Dipper being irritated with her ever stopped her before?

He... he said he needed time...

Oh, penguin poop! That is such crap, it's obviously her *own* fear that's been holding her back from doing all these things, using that 'time' thing as an excuse. And now, what, she's taken like *fifty* emotional steps back from her brother, while at the same time wondering why things aren't going back to normal faster, why it's taking *him* so long to come around?

Ah, crapsticks. She's been a horrible sister, hasn't she? At the very least a super lame and cowardly one.

Mabel shuts her eyes tightly against the jacket of Aiden's tux. She's so tired of being afraid all the time. Of walking on eggshells. Of worrying that her brother might secretly hate her. It's about time she puts on her big girl pants and does something to change it.

Tomorrow morning, when she gets home from Brittney Ayers' after-prom party, she'll make it happen. She'll stalk straight up to Dipper's bedroom, and when he opens the door with that cute bedhead of his she'll throw her arms around him and they'll have a nice, long, air-clearing hug, and then *they will work this shiz out*. One weird night is *not* gonna take down the Mystery Twins, hell freakin' no. They will find a way to be normal around each other if it kills her. Heck, she'd even be willing to resort to one of Dipper's twenty-point-plans for the cause. Anything. Whatever it takes. And maybe after they talk everything out she'll spout off one of her funniest jokes and make him laugh until there are tears in his eyes. And then she'll kiss him.

She sticks out her tongue, embarrassed.

Mmmnope, not kiss him. That does not fall within the guidelines of being normal around each other, Mabel, ya dummy. Nope nope nope.

Well, maybe one on the cheek? She's done that plenty of times before. It might be pushin' the boundaries a little at this point in the air-clearing timeline, but that could still potentially fall within the guidelines, right?

Oh, give it a rest already. You want to kiss him. You always want to kiss him. And not on the cheek. Deal with it, lady.

Okay, whatever, fine. No big deal, she'll 'fess up to that much. So maybe she wants to kiss Dipper and not on the cheek. Maybe she wants to kiss him on the lips, really *really* badly, but pfff, she wanted to kiss the guy on the 10 dollar bill too at one point, she's had loads of weird this-too-shall-pass kiss urges over the course of her life, it's not like this is any—it's—she's—that, that does *not* mean that she—

Uhhhh this logic is gettin a little—

No, wait—waitwaitwait—

It drops on her like a cartoon grand piano. Her heart rate skyrockets, her skin heating up all over, as it finally occurs to Mabel that this crippling fear she's been stewing in for so long, not unlike fear-shame-there's-no-way-I-could-be-*that*-person stew in a crockpot on low, may have also blatantly and stupidly kept her from conceding to the hard fact that—

Oh, shit... take mushrooms.

She's... she's actually in *love* with...?

Nope, yup, oh lord, she is. She's in love with Dipper. Thaaat's definitely a thing.

Wow. After alllll that bullcrap, all that hurt, after she shoved him away, scared and determined not to be in love with him... there it is. She *loves* him. Oops. Holy mother of pearl, come to think of it she is most definitely head-over-heels, frolic through a sunny field of daisies, straight up *rom-com female lead status* in love with her own freakin' brother.

She is undeniably *that* person. And she doesn't care anymore.

It's totally not normal, but, but—well, *screw* normal! If normal means keeping all of this straitjacketed up inside of herself like a big lie-living in-denial zombie, then who needs it anyway!

Her eyes wide and stunned, Mabel glances up at Aiden, whose arms are still around her waist, while her hands sit lifeless on his shoulders. She looks out into the sea of fellow dancing peeps and squints a little to herself, feeling stupid.

What... the heck is she even *doing* here?

Don't get her wrong, Aiden is awesome, Aiden is attractive and sweet and romantic and the list goes on forever practically but *yikes*, she still doesn't wanna be here with him—she doesn't wanna be *with* him at all.

Who she really wants to be with is at home reading a worn out mystery novel, or playing *Monsterrmon Conquest* on his DS, or browsing reddit threads about conspiracy theories for fun... or laying there listening to music, arms crossed behind his head, thinking about things... maybe about her?

Oh man, she needs to go home. This dumb over-hyped dance has suddenly become so low on her priorities list it's scary, and she needs to go home right now.

Mabel tugs out of Aiden's arms, taking a step back and wringing her hands.

"Aiden... Aiden I'm sorry, but I, I gotta leave."

His brows raise, and her tall, handsome, soon-to-be-ex boyfriend's winning smile starts to falter. "What's wrong? Do you feel sick or something?"

"No, I mean like... leave as in I gotta *leave*. Forever." Mabel dramatically turns away from him, takes a few steps. Then spins back around on her heel a second later with an apologetic look, almost knocking into a nearby dancing couple, awkwardly waving her hands. "N-not like *forever* forever, I'll probably see you in math Monday." She guiltily purses her lips to one side. "But I... I can't be your girlfriend anymore, and I'm really, really sorry..."

Aiden only stares at her, completely bewildered. "Mabel, what the hell? Are—are you breaking up with me right now?"

"Yes," she answers resolutely, then cringes a little. "Um, I know this is bad timing... I'm probably, definitely handling this really badly, I just... blargh, I'm so sorry, Aiden. But I... I really have to go." She weakly points a finger over her shoulder.

Aiden looks at her like she's got a tiny baby clown glued to her forehead. "... You're serious. You're actually breaking up with me. Here. In the middle of prom."

"Um... yeahh..." Mabel cringes at the floor, kicking herself for not thinking the sad break-up part of the night through even a little bit before she instigated it. Oh jeez, wrap it up, wrap it up Mabel—"I'm really, really, sorry."

Aiden doesn't respond, only barely shakes his head at her. The poor guy still seems so confused that words have been stricken out of him, he just keeps staring at her with that blank, vaguely angry look on his face. His blue eyes dart somewhere off to the side, then he frowns down at the dance floor.

"Um. I'm just gonna... see myself out... bye, Aiden." She leans forward to give him one last goodbye peck on the cheek, next hiking up her ruffy skirt and rushing past him before she can catch a glimpse of his expression. If she sees anymore of his reaction she won't be able to push the gross and guilty feelings down anymore, and she can't feel full-throttle horrible about breaking up with Aiden if she's going to fix the more pressing matter she's spent the last month and a half feeling gross and guilty about. Only like fifteen-percent-power horrible. Gotta... gotta put a pin in that one. For now she mollifies the gross-guilty-feels with the thought that Aiden deserves way better than what she could give to that relationship, anyway.

Gnawing on her bottom lip, fists full of tulle skirt, Mabel maneuvers her way through a sea of slow dancing couples, past the table with spiked punch and fancy cookies and finger foods, past a few of her friends, including Jenna, whose call she ignores. Her pace becomes faster and faster as she makes her way towards the exit, only one person and one thing on her mind.

Mabel bursts through the gym doors, cool night air greeting her as she continues to run, erupting with an exhilarated holler of “*Freedommm!*” The heads of the few people hanging around outside all spin in her direction, and she stops, putting on an embarrassed grin and shooting up two thumbs.

“It’s cool! We’re all cool here, carry on people.” There’s a beat of raised eyebrows and amused faces before everyone returns to their conversations or their phones and Mabel lets her thumbs drop.

Step one, leave the building—check. Step two, figure out a decent, non-horrible person way to tell Dipper something along the lines of *heyyy broseph just kidding about all the weeks of turmoil and angst I actually do love you after all!* ... No, wait, that’s step three. Step two would be to actually get home... somehow.

Mabel looks helplessly around the parking lot, her hands flopping at her sides, the muted beat of a pop song radiating from the brick walls behind her.

Oh, son of a buttnugget. How the heck is she supposed to get home?

She arrived in a limo that Aiden’s parents paid for, so there’s a very, very slim chance that she’ll be able to catch a ride home the same way. *‘Hey there friend, sorry for dumping you just now but is it cool if I borrow your limo? Just for a sec!’*

Yeahhh, no.

It’s too far and too dark to walk alone. Her parents are out of the question, they’re an hour away in the city watching *Aida*. Mom loves musicals almost as much as she does; she and Dad left for their dinner-and-a-play date night right after they’d finished taking prom pics of Mabel and her now ex-boyfriend.

She racks her brain... maybe call Dipper to come pick her up? Mabel thinks on that for a moment before striking the idea. Nah, she wants to surprise him. Show up in his doorway a-la MJ in a wedding dress from *Spider-Man 2* and uplift his lonely home-on-prom-night soul, then they could totally do that same sort of intense close-up open mouthed kiss thing—yes, perfect! There’s a chance for some serious Hollywood level grand gestures of love here if she plays her cards right!

A gust of wind rolls through the parking lot, sending goosebumps across Mabel’s bare shoulders and down her arms; the chill puts a bit of a halt to her brain’s overexcited planning.

Okay. Okay. Calmmm down Mabel, you’re getting a lil’ ahead of yourself here. There’s still the whole matter of Dipper’s feelings, and newsflash—you *have no idea what they are, anymore.*

She broke his heart, like, *completely*. She... yeah, she is painfully aware of that little fact. Then basically ditched out on the mystery twins and left him to fend for himself with said broken heart. Yikes. It *has* been over a month and a half since the words ‘I love you’ came out of his mouth directed at her. And he did say all he wanted was the normalcy they’ve been working so desperately to get back to, that they *have* sort of been getting back to.

But... but maybe there’s a chance he still doesn’t?

Gotta get home!

Mabel’s eyes skim her surroundings, frantically searching out a last ditch idea—and then her eyes land on a nearby bike rack. Particularly on one of the two bikes that aren’t chained up. An idea strikes her.

Learn your lessons people; lock up your bikes.

That’s how Mabel ends up pedaling away from her school on prom night in a giant, frilly dress, high heels dangling from one of her thumbs, the outside stragglers around the gym doors sending her retreating back weird looks all over again. Stuck to the newly empty spot on the bike rack is a star-shaped sticky note, words hastily scrawled out in loopy handwriting: ‘*Sorry, needed your bike, emergency, totes will return tomorrow! PS, I mean I’m glad you did and all, but who rides their bike to prom anyway?*’ Hearts and a quick drawing of a tubby unicorn were also added for good measure. Mabel Pines is no thief.



By the time her house comes into view, Mabel’s former perfectly sculpted up-do is a windblown mess, and there are a few pieces of her dress’ giant puffy skirt missing around the hem (multiple entanglements with the gears, not a fun experience). But her mood has

stayed managed to stay excited, as she spent the entire ride playing out a scenario in her head wherein Dipper *does* still love her. The more she imagines it, the more she's thinking that he has to, right?

"IIIII'm comin for ya, Dip..." Mabel says aloud as she turns into their driveway, a little out of breath, a thin sheen of sweat on her brow. She cuts the handlebars into the grass and zooms the bike through their front yard, braking right in front of the azaleas next to the front steps. Her attempt to leap off the seat is foiled by the fact that a bit of her dress is caught in the gears again—"Eep!"—and she tips over into the bushes, bike and all.

"Owwie... wow, *ooh*, such grace, Lady Mabelton... *nice*—"

Soon she's standing on her front porch, feet still bare as she madly goes about brushing dirt and sticks and leaves out of her hair and off her dress. When it's the best it's gonna get, Mabel takes a jittery breath, digging a house key out of her purse.

Here goes nothin'.

The first thing she sees upon pushing through the front door is Dipper himself. The air catches in her lungs, a sudden bout of nerves overtaking her. Turns out he's not in his room after all, he's sprawled on the living room couch next to their thirteen-year-old tabby cat, Buttons, socked feet propped up on the coffee table, DS held between his hands.

"Mabel?" Dipper sits up in his seat a little, his eyes wide with shock.

"Sup, bro." They're the first words that came to mind, and not quite what she pictured first saying to him during the entire bike ride home. *Well so much for my grand Hollywood entrance speech*, she gripes in her head, pulling a rogue twig out of her hair.

"What are you doing here? It's only like," Dipper glances down at his watch, "ten-thirty. I thought prom went until eleven? And weren't you going to Brittney Ayers' after party... thing?"

Mabel waves a dismissive hand, tossing her heels in the small pile of shoes by the door, so done with the whole prom business. "Eh. You were right about prom. It was overrated. And I'm raincheckin' on the after party."

The wary expression on his face dissolves a bit. "Oh. Okay?"

He looks adorable, staring at her all confused-like. Her chest inflates with happiness at just the sight of him, sittin' there in sweatpants and a faded *Fight Fighters* t-shirt. With that cute pink nose and those big brown eyes and full, kissable lips... not to mention that baby's-first-goatee peach fuzz on his chin that she thinks is... she *finally* admits it to herself... hot. And all that fluffy chestnut hair that just looks so perfectly muss-able. Man. Gosh it's nice to let these thoughts fly free! *Fly freeeee, taboo thoughts, fly freeeee*, her mind cackles in a very Wicked Witch of the West like fashion.

... Oh, gosh, she wants to tell him.

“... *Yooo*, Mabel, anybody home in there?” Dipper’s voice breaks through her zonked out train of thought.

“Whuzzat?”

“I asked how you got home. And frankly I’m a little scared to ask why you look like you’ve been running through the woods or something... this isn’t gonna be like, some prom night horror story, is it?”

“Oh, I—” Mabel lets out an awkward giggle, immediately starting up round two of dusting herself off. “Psh, nah I’m fine, it’s, y’know. Nooot important.”

“Okaayyy...” Dipper tilts his head down a little and his eyes dart away from hers, “... Um, whatever happened to—”

“Me and Aiden broke up. We are officially doneski.” She crosses her hands and flings them out in a sweeping motion, smothering the little knowing smile that wants to be on her face. She’s gotta go about this delicately, she’s decided. No grand declarations of love allowed, she’s just gotta... eeease her way into this. Feel things out. Yeah. That’s the plan.

“Wait, what?” Dipper’s head jerks right back up. He frowns, sitting up worriedly and setting his DS down on the coffee table. “What happened? Did he—?”

“Calm down calm down, I was the dumper here, not the dumpee. Nothing bad happened, I just... kinda realized I wasn’t feelin’ it anymore, I guess.” Dipper’s expression shifts from super-concerned to blank and he doesn’t say anything to that. Mabel crosses her arms and makes a face. “Erm, I *may* have blindsided the guy a tiny bit.”

“Yeahh, you have a little bit of a history of that,” Dipper says kinda under his breath, letting out a dry laugh.

Mabel’s eyebrows shoot up, surprised that her brother would be not only referencing, but joking about a subject that they usually avoid like the plague. Dipper catches onto her incredulity fast. His cheeks turn pink and he quickly drops eye contact, running a nervous hand through his hair.

“Sorry—I didn’t mean—sorry.”

Mabel marches over to where Dipper is hunched over on the couch, looking so pitifully ashamed, and punches his shoulder while blowing a raspberry, because she’s so flippin’ tired of this miserable, dumb ‘age of shame’ they’ve been stuck living in. There’s no reason for it anymore, and she wants to declare it officially over. Forever. He peeks up at her, and she grins.

“Pff, it’s cool, broseph. No worries.” It really is nice to watch most of the tension leave Dipper’s face as he timidly smiles back. Mabel begins to fiddle with the ruffles of her prom dress while the sound of commercials plays in the background. “... So uh, whatcha watchin’?”

“Oh—they’re marathoning all the original *Ducktective* movies on SBT. On number two now...” Dipper bobs his head casually. There’s a beat of hesitation before he continues, looking super-endearingly hopeful, “Wanna watch with me?”

Mabel’s heart swells. “You kidding? You had me at the mere *mention* of my favorite fowl detective!” Her eyes flit over the empty adjacent armchair before she thinks *to heck with it* and points to the spot next to Dipper on the couch, which is still occupied by their sleeping gray tabby. “Ey, mind if I couch it with you?”

Her brother raises his eyebrows in surprise, then grins warmly. “Go for it, but you might piss off Buttons. That spot was his before I even got here.”

“As if, Buttons *looooves* me. I’m basically his human mommy.” She picks up the old cat to cuddle him to her face, sitting down and taking him with her. But Buttons struggles hard, squirming out of her arms and dashing from the room. Dipper snorts out a laugh. Mabel waves off the cat snuffage, settling back into the couch, blowing the bangs out of her face. “Pffff. He’s just having an off day.”

“Riiight.” Dipper reaches over and plucks a leaf out of her ruined prom ‘do, smirking.

Silence settles between them as the movie returns from commercials... and Mabel doesn’t feel that stifling awkward that usually fogs up the air when they’re alone together for too long. Judging by the way he’s flopped comfortably back into the couch, features content, Dipper doesn’t feel it, either. Holy cow, this is like, above-and-beyond *awesome*. Tonight’s the night things are noticeably turning around for the better, and it’s such a huge relief.

Mabel starts to shimmy in her seat, trying to get more comfortable, the layers and layers of tulle on her gown crinkling and bunching up underneath her. “Yech, clearly this dress is not meant for sitting. Or comfort. Seriously man, I’ve had ruffles up my butt all night.”

He laughs, and her heart swells at the sound. It feels so good to make him laugh.

“Butt ruffles aside, it looks good on you.” Mabel automatically looks over to Dipper at the comment, but he’s gazing intently at the television. It’s difficult to hold in her thrilled squeak. He thinks she looks good! Well, he thinks her *dress* looks good. Although that makes her good-lookin’ by default, right? And it’s hard to tell since they’re watching TV, but she’s pretty sure he might be trying to avoid eye contact right now. All good signs, good good signs... but she still can’t know for sure. Whether he’s got the L-word goin’ on for her or not.

... *Ughh*, she wants to know so badly!

Mabel decides to feel things out a little with some stealthily phrased sentences. “Ugh, it better. I spent eighty bucks of babysitting money on this thing, and like twenty more on my own genius personal touches, I at *least* better be lookin’ pretty.”

Out of the corner of her eye she can see Dipper grinning at the television. “Don’t worry, you are.”

“Ya got that right, son.”

Hm. That whole exchange felt mildly flirty. And he’s still not looking at her. But, not wanting to push, Mabel leaves it at that.

British accents, quacking, and their own laughter fills the room as they settle into the movie. Dipper starts making his usual commentary, Mabel delivers her usual arm smacks to get him to shut up so they can actually hear the dang movie. Everything feels so... *normal*.

Ecstatic at how well things are going, Mabel gets bold, stealthily scooting closer and closer to her brother until her head is resting on his shoulder and she can feel startled eyes staring down at her. Dipper is so obviously stiff and apprehensive, but she’s determined to stay put, even with her heart beating out of control. Just when she starts to worry that maybe she jumped the gun with the boldness and the head-to-shoulder touching, she feels a cautious arm snake around to rest on the couch behind her shoulders. A few seconds later he makes a smart-alecky comment about the movie’s lame special effects, and Mabel can’t keep the smile off her face.

Yes. Good. This is the way things are supposed to be.

A half hour passes, the stiffness in Dipper’s body eventually disappearing completely. His arm has migrated from the couch behind her to around her shoulders, her head snuggled into the crook of his neck, both of them sunk down comfortably into the couch. Everything has managed to stay so lighthearted and chill, she can hardly believe it. At this point Mabel feels so full of hope—earnest hope that she finally has her brother back, but also that giddy hope that she might be able to, possibly, have her cake and eat it too—that she’s on the verge of bursting with it.

“I miss this,” she says suddenly, breaking the comfortable quiet of the past ten minutes. Her eyes tilt up to his face. “I miss twin time. I gotta say, bro, I’ve been seriously lacking in twin time. This kills the Mabel.”

“Yeah,” Dipper says, his tone careful but sincere, “I miss it too.”

“We could try doing stuff like this more often? If you want?”

Her ear is still pressed against his t-shirt and she’s pretty sure she just felt his heart speed up. “Sure. Yeah, that’d be—” He stops and clear his throat mid-sentence. “I’d like that.”

The atmosphere of the room has shifted a tiny bit. Mabel subtly takes a deep breath in mental preparation. Something is telling her that if she’s going to ask, she should do it now.

“... Hey, Dipper?”

“Yeah?”

C'monnnnn Mabel girl... ask him. Just do it.

"...I was wondering, er, I wanted to know. Are you still, um..." Oh jeez, she's fumbling, here. Her mouth goes dry and she licks her lips, forcing out the question she's been dying to know the answer to. "...Do you still like, you know... loove me?"

Judging by how severely his body tenses up, Dipper clearly wasn't expecting to be asked *that* particular question. Staring down at her, stunned, his face heats up into a glorious shade of red, while his mouth stays shut. Her heart gathers more speed as she convinces herself that these all have to be good signs, right?

"Really, it's okay. You can tell me, Dip," she coaxes, sitting up to look at him properly, doing her best not to give away the fact that she's hoping for one answer in particular. "Either way I'm not gonna freak out like last time, I promise."

He stares blankly at her a couple more seconds, and then his eyes begin to shift, looking anywhere but at hers. Mabel can feel the palm on her shoulder grow moist just before Dipper awkwardly takes his arm back, instead hunching forward to rest his elbows on his knees and wring his hands in his lap. The silence is admittedly starting to make her the bad kind of nervous, as it's giving her too much time to question in her head whether or not it was a mistake to ask him such a huge, personal question so bluntly. The chill, comfortable vibes they'd been basking in dried up so alarmingly quickly, wayyy faster than Mabel was prepared for. Now she's sort of hating herself for killing them, missing them already, and she still has no idea what's going through his head but poor Dipper looks so uncomfortable, when just a minute ago he was looking happier than she'd seen him in a long time—augh, okay, so she might've read the room wrong before. Maybe this isn't the moment, maybe this is just yet another not-thought-through-Mabel-blunder. Her steadily depleting confidence causes her brain-mouth connection to suffer a malfunction and the babbles come pouring out at the exact same time Dipper finally opens his mouth to speak.

"Um—"

"—I mean you don't have to tell me if you don't want to, I was just sort of curious but not in like a rrrr-I'm-gonna-judge-you way more like in a eyyy-just-checkin-in-on-things way, like just sayin' if you need someone to talk to about stuff I'm all ears 'cuz you're my brother and I love you no matter what and I should've been telling you that this whole time and I'm so sorry I haven't been and my bad I cut you off, what were you gonna say?"

Mabel gasps in a breath to recover from that epic mouthful, while Dipper blinks at her a few times, bewildered, his eyebrows sky-high. "I—uh, thiiink I caught all of that? But—okay, wow, uh—thanks?" He scrunches up his eyes for a second and shakes his head. "I mean no, that wasn't supposed to come out sarcastic, seriously, thanks. That is, actually really nice to hear."

He quirks a grateful little smile in her direction, his eyes shimmering and crinkling at the corners, warming her insides all over—oh gosh, she loves this awkward, amazing person, it's becoming harder and harder not to just blurt it out. "Well I really really meant it, bro," Mabel tells him sincerely, reaching over and covering the hands still clasped together in his lap with one of hers.

Dipper opens his mouth a little like he's about to say something, but just ends up making this weird, vaguely confused face, his eyebrows rising back up on his forehead as he silently stares down at her small, manicured hand on his. There's a pause that lasts a couple seconds too long. *Hookay, awk silence, gosh you are really pushin' it with the touching, huh*—Mabel gives his hands a friendly, hasty squeeze and makes a quick retreat, color rising in her cheeks. Bluh. Getting majorly sidetracked, here. "But, uh, so, would youuu maybe want to talk about it? You know, the um, loove thing?"

Dipper's face falls into a wince. "Ah, right. The love thing."

Mabel watches him heave a sigh, and it's impossible to tell if it's a resigned sigh or an annoyed sigh or a nervous sigh or what—she bites her lip, anxiously playing with a piece of ripped tulle on her dress. "Blargh, sorry, if you're not comfortable talking about it—"

"No no, it's fine, really. I guess before I just wasn't, um... I mean jeez, you are blunt to a fault, Mabels," he laughs, juuust shy of normally, a high, sort of straining sound. She giggles along with him, also just missing the normal-laugh mark because she is *this* close to getting an answer out of him, to finally knowing, she can *feel* it, and it's getting infinitely more difficult to stay cool and keep the angry swarm of butterflies (they feel more like bees right now actually) in her tummy under wraps.

They quit with the weird laughter at the same time. Dipper glances over at her out of the corner of his eye, and Mabel catches his eyes and cocks her head at him expectantly. Maybe a little too expectantly, but she can't help it, her heart's beating so fast she feels like she might keel over, "So, are you..."

His eyes dart away. "Uh... right. Uh, well I mean," he clears his throat, "getting over you was... it wasn't exactly—I mean it definitely took me some time, but... at this point, yeah, I think it's safe to say that I'm past the whole, 'feelings for my sister' life chapter." He rasps out a dry chuckle, shrugs and scratches his chin. "I just feel like I'm finally—like, I'm *finally* in a place where we can actually start getting back to *normal*, you know?"

Throughout his whole explanation Mabel's heart was locked in a free fall, plummeting faster and faster with every word that came out of his mouth—and when Dipper finishes talking, it finally meets the bottom of her stomach with a big, grisly, *ker-splat*.

Just like that, she has her answer.

Getting over you.

O-oh. Ouch.

The stinging words linger in Mabel's ears as she starts to blink rapidly. God, he sounded so *relieved*. Finally free from the Mabel-love burden, rejoiiiice. Her lower lip quivers. Ah. Crap. Dipper really doesn't love her anymore. Not in the way she's just realized she loves him.

Pfff, silly Mabel. Of course he doesn't love you. Why would he, after everything? After weeks and weeks of being spurned? After she'd sought *him* out, willingly took him up on the offer of his heart, and then threw it back in his face with an extra painful curveball? After she came into his room, *slept* with him, kissed him in reassurance, let him fall asleep in her arms, basically gave him a promise that everything would be okay... and then turned around and ran, like a *scared* little girl, back into the arms of her boyfriend the very next morning? Like, right in front of his face? Blech, who could ever love someone who does things like that? No one.

It's perfectly reasonable. He went through a heck of a lot to get to this point, dangit, he earned this. It's what he thinks she wants anyway, which is probably part of the reason why he sounded so... happy's not the right word, but... ugh, he sure wasn't sad to share the news with her, either. And, hey, it's what she *should* want. So it's very unfair of her to feel like she's just been gut-punched. Yikes. She's a sucky person, huh.

Dipper turns toward her with a smile fixed on his lips, only to be greeted with Mabel's eyes brimming with tears. The half smile drops so fast it's as if it was never there, his whole expression falling with it. His hand reaches out to her, scared and uncertain, hovering near her arm for a bit before just barely touching her shoulder.

"Aw Mabel, no, please don't cry... I'm so sorry I made everything so goddamn weird but I promise you it's over, you don't have to—"

"Nonono," Mabel blurts, needing more than anything for her brother to *not* finish that sentence, because he doesn't even know what's happening and still thinks it's his fault somehow. And she's a terrible, terrible person. "No," she continues, sniffing heavily and swiping the back of her hand under her nose. "It's nothing you did, you're totally fine, bro. You just... you just happen to have gotten stuck with the most horrible jerkface in the universe for a sister, that's all."

"The entire universe?" Dipper laughs weakly, scratching the side of his face. "That seems a little harsh, don'tcha think?" She shakes her head vigorously, a tear breaking its way out of the dam in her eyes, and the halfhearted joking stops there. "Mabel, what's wrong?" he pleads.

Oh no. The words are right there, right on the tip of her tongue. And he's staring right at her, with that worried, genuine look on his face where all he wants is to know the truth. But she can't tell him. She shouldn't... all it would do is make things worse. They'd be thrown right back into the same crappy situation, just with the roles reversed. She gnaws on the inside of her cheek, the truth itching to burst out.

Don't you dare tell him, Mabel Pines!

But it looks like she's gonna be staying true to her 'most horrible jerkface in the universe' title, as the words have already decided to form themselves into sentences and are on the verge of forcing their way out.

She shrugs her shaky shoulders and looks down, attempting a smile. "Ahh, it's just... I dunno, it's ironic, you know? When my stupid dumb self finally decides to figure out that *woah*, heyyy, look at that, I *am* in love with my brother, whoopsie, my brother's not in love with me anymore! Haha, it's like an awkward circle of loooove, or something..." Smacking her forehead dramatically, she lets out a high-pitched sound that's supposed to be a laugh. "*Doh!* Nice going there Mabel, ya took too stinkin' long! What a dope, right!"

Mabel tries to follow up her little speech with more laughter, but only manages a few chuckles before she ends up choking on one of them. Her throat closes up, two streams of tears making their way down her cheeks. Oh, crap, here come the waterworks, and she's not going to be able to turn them off for a while. She hugs herself, sniffing audibly. She's horrible, horrible, horrible.

Dipper takes his hand off her shoulder, his mouth hanging open and his eyes impossibly wide. "... You love me?" he mumbles in a faraway tone.

She can't look at him anymore. She doesn't deserve to. Mabel scoots along the couch in the opposite direction and curls away, covering her face with her hands. "Ohgodohgod..." she shakes her head, her voice cracked and muffled, "I'm *s-sorry*, Dipper, I know I have like, zero right to be telling you this *now*, not after what happened, not after everything I p-put you through, but I just—I couldn't—I didn't know h-how to—" She shudders out a helpless, miserable sound, scrunching up her hands into fists and knocking them lightly against her forehead. "*Ugh*, I'm the worst sister ever and if you hate me or never wanna talk to me again I'd get it, honestly, you don't need to—"

"Woah woah, hey—*just*—" Dipper scoots down the couch after her, his hands reaching out to cup either side of her face, gently turning it back towards his. The awestruck look that she's met with shuts her right up. "*Mabel*," he breathes, bringing his face in closer to hers, "*Holy shit*, Mabels, I—I was lying before."

"What...?"

Dipper cracks a shy smile, and she swears her heart almost stops. "Yeahh, um, when I said I was over you? That was just me telling you what I thought you wanted to hear because I miss you, and I wanted things to be okay with us again... but no, yeah, I definitely still love you, Mabel."

"*Whaaa?* For reals?" The tears are still coming and she's not sure why, because she's also smiling so widely that her cheeks hurt.

"Oh man, yeah," Dipper murmurs, his thumbs brushing away any wayward tears. "So much it's uh, it's pretty pathetic, actually."

Mabel lets the words sink in. Dipper had been lying, for her. Just doing his overprotective brother thing. He's not over her at all. He still loves her, still wants her. He never stopped.

She giggles thickly, hiccuping, the corners of her eyes crinkling as she gazes into his. "Hey, pathetic's okay. I-I like pathetic."

Dipper lets out an appreciative laugh, brushing her hair behind her ears and still looking into her eyes with that amazed, totally-blown-away expression on his face. "Holy shit," he repeats with hushed awe. "This is really happening. I'm not dreaming. You mean it, you actually...?"

Mabel nods, licking her lips and staring back at him, hardly daring to blink. "Yeah, I do."

She can hear the breath hitch in his throat, his lips curving in a wobbly fashion, spreading further and further across his face until he's smiling this bazillion-watt smile that immediately strikes Mabel with the need to giggle with pure joy. So she does, and Dipper starts to laugh too, high and airy, still holding her face in his hands and looking at her like someone just handed him the winning lotto numbers and the exact GPS coordinates of the location of Bigfoot at the same time.

"Oh my god," he says in between giggles.

Mabel snorts in the last of the tear-induced snot, nodding with barely-contained excitement, laughing, "Chyeah bro, agreed!"

The laughter dies down comfortably, Dipper's mega-smile gradually fading as his eyes drop down to her lips. As he stares, his tongue pokes out to wet his own, Mabel unblinkingly honing in on the tiny action without realizing it. Their eyes flit back up, meeting for a few seconds. Dipper swallows and carefully moves closer, until their noses brush gently and Mabel's heart is flapping around behind her ribs like a caged butterfly. "Can I kiss you?" he whispers.

At first Mabel is confused, wondering why he's even bothering to ask. Then she remembers the past month and a half, sees the slight tension in his forehead, the cautious vulnerability still shining in his eyes, and the answer becomes very, very clear to her.

So rather than with words, Mabel responds by closing her eyes and smoothly easing her lips onto his, all of it meant as an unspoken assurance of *yes, of course you can, you don't have to be afraid anymore, you can kiss me and I'll kiss you back and this time I'm not going to run away afterwards*. Dipper's lips come springing to life against hers, his fingers diving into her hair, reverently cradling the back of her neck as he tilts his head and leans into her. It's a slow, gentle kiss, yet at the same time so deliciously and knee-buckingly *thorough*, making Mabel's fingers curl into his shirt and her body want to float about ten feet off the ground. All those same warm, tingling sparks come rushing back to her, and she can't believe it's been so long since the last time they did this, can't believe it took her this long to figure it out.

Soon Dipper is carefully separating their lips in a way that leaves her swooning and lightheaded. Her eyes have just fluttered back open when she feels arms encircle her back and a head covered with messy, curly brown hair bury itself in the junction of her neck and shoulder. Mabel swallows down the urge to cry happy tears as she lays her head against his and fiercely returns the embrace.



“Man. Didn’t think I was ever gonna get to do that again,” Dipper murmurs into her shoulder, and he hugs her a little tighter.

Her heart sinks a bit at the comment and she shuts her eyes tight, hiding her face in his hair. “*Blargh*, I really am sorry Dipper, I haven’t been able to get that morning out of my head—”

“Hey, no, I didn’t mean it like that,” he soothes, his hands rubbing up and down her back with soft, comforting motions. “It’s okay.”

“*No*, it’s really not, like I don’t get it, how can you forgive me so easily after everything I—”

“—Mabel, seriously, I promise you it’s okay. I mean... pff, just remembering how in denial *I* was when I was first realizing I had not-so-normal feelings for you... I should never have taken us that far that fast when I kind of knew you weren’t totally, uh... you know. Where I was.” He shakes his head. “That wasn’t right, no matter how you look at it. Like honestly, I’m just happy that you don’t—” Dipper stops himself abruptly, breathing out thickly and turning to press his face into her hair. “...I’m just happy you’re here, Mabel.”

Mabel’s eyebrows knit together as she gently runs her fingers through his hair, causing a shudder to run down Dipper’s spine. “See, you’re doing it again, that thing where you take all the blame for yourself. Why can’t you just admit that this was just as much my fault as—ohh snap...”

Soft lips press against her pulse, the immediate rushing sensation in her tummy fizzling out her sentence. She melts against him as he delicately kisses her neck, so spellbound that all she can really do is hold him a little tighter, cooing out a “*Dip*,” through an amorous sigh.

Eventually his lips go still. Mabel shivers when they move again, this time words accompanying them, tickling at her skin. “Y’know, at this point, I really don’t give a crap whose fault it was,” Dipper says. “Right now I just want to hug you... damn, I missed you, Mabel. Life is straight up boring when you’re not around lighting it up with your weird sweaters and your snorty laugh and... your creepily endless supply of glitter and stickers and... just—all of it. I missed all of it.” He laughs softly, dropping a kiss just below her ear. “Man, I love you.”

“*Dipperrrr*,” Mabel giggles bashfully, blushing up a storm. “Ugh, stop saying such sweet things, you sickeningly sweet sweet-talkin’ little man. Yeesh. I’m gonna get a friggin cavity.”

Dipper just laughs some more as he pulls away from her neck, grinning ear to ear. They lock eyes, back to smiling at each other like goofy goobers, and before either of them knows it they’re both leaning in, lips meeting hard in the middle. Mabel suddenly feels the need to make up for all the kisses they should’ve been sharing for over a month already, and it shows in the way she clutches him closer, tilts her head further, fearlessly sweeps her tongue in his mouth. Her lips move with a ferocity that she can feel him almost scrambling to keep up with, her hands raking through his hair. A giddy sense of victory fills her up when Dipper moans low in his throat, his fingertips digging into the back of her dress. The hoarse, longing sound hits Mabel right in the lower belly, making her heart beat double-time, and she whimpers out a tiny, entirely pleased sound in response.

That dumb ol’ need for oxygen is the only reason she pulls her mouth away from his, totally breathless. She opens her eyes to find Dipper breathing hard, his face very red and his eyes still very much closed. When they blearily blink their way open, Mabel can’t help but giggle at the vacant expression on his face, one that could only be described as severely, terminally lovestruck. A thrill rushes through her, because you can’t fake stuff like that. What he’s feeling is *real*, and she she can hardly comprehend that it’s all for her.

“... Well shit. Yup. Definitely, definitely still in love with you.” Dipper’s ears flush and he glances down towards his lap, a small, sheepish laugh bubbling out of him. Mabel slips a finger underneath his fuzzy chin, tilting his face back up to hers.

“Aww shucks. Ah love yew too lil’ baybeh bruhther,” she singsongs in a falsetto Lil’ Gideon voice, pushing his cheeks together and batting her eyelashes at him, and there’s a short pause before Dipper breaks it with a snort and they both start giggling again.

They share a few more softer kisses after that, but mostly there’s just a whole lot hugging and cuddling going on. Warm, firm, Dipper hugs. Ah, she missed them so much.

They doze off together on the couch with Mabel listening to Dipper’s heartbeat, her cheek pressed against his chest, one of his arms draped around her. *Ductective 2: The Adventure of the Duckgate Miracle* transitions into *Ducktective 3: The Adventure of the Duckford Horror*, but neither twin notices, both of them exhausted. She doesn’t even poke him when Dipper starts to snore lightly, too sleepy and too comfortable to lift a finger. It’s been a long month.

Later, Mabel's eyes crack open and then fly shut again when the lock on the front door starts to jangle, signifying their parents' arrival home. She doesn't worry about moving since her and Dipper's nap position is still in the platonic green zone, instead dedicating her efforts to feigning sleep. There's the sound of the front door opening and closing, then footsteps walking over to stand next to the couch.

"Wasn't Mabel supposed to be sleeping over at her friend's tonight?"

"I thought so... but I gotta say, it's good to see these two hanging out again."

"I was just thinking the same thing. Aww. My sleeping babies."

She feels her bangs being brushed aside, closely followed by Mom's lips on her forehead, hearing Dipper receive the same forehead kiss right after. Someone lays a blanket over them, there's some rustling in the kitchen, and then two pairs of footsteps are retreating up the stairs. Once everything has gone quiet again (aside from muted quacks coming from the television), Mabel feels Dipper's fingers start to slowly trickle up and down the bare skin of her arm, and she smiles.

Whoo, boy. Little do they know.

Just as she predicted, Mabel sees Aiden in seventh period math class on Monday. Awkwardly enough, the seating arrangement in that class leaves her right in between him and Jenna, who both seemed intent on giving her the cold shoulder. Her gossipy redheaded friend must have heard about her whole dramatic prom exit and decided to take Aiden's side. To be honest Mabel doesn't give a rat's ass about being ignored by Jenna, but she does feel a little icky (horrible) about how she ended things with her ex-boyfriend, sad to have lost his friendship.

Over the weekend Aiden sent her a string of texts demanding answers, and then a longer string of texts that sounded just plain desperate, culminating with a long-ish awkward phone call on Sunday that seemed to cut the bf-gf ties between them for good. The whole break up process made her squirm with guilt; for a good while there, she had been convinced that Aiden was her *dream boy* (a concept that just sounds silly to her now, since the sappy, overly-mushy title doesn't really fit Dipper), so she felt terrible about having to keep her explanations so vague. But it's not like she can just say, '*look Aiden, gonna be straight with ya here, I sorta left you for my brother*'—that definitely would not fly. The poor guy is just gonna have to deal with a vague break up.

By the time the end of class rolls around, Aiden has moved seats, and Mabel has sunk low in her chair.

She breathes a sigh of relief when the final bell rings and she's free of horribly awkward Algebra 2. She books it out of there and meets up with her friend Leigh to make the journey across the school to their lockers; Leigh fills her in with more details about the drama that

went down at Brittney Ayers' after prom party (thankfully not grilling her too badly for Aiden-break-up details, unlike the rest of her friends). Listening to the after prom stories, she really can't say she's sad she missed out on it.

Mabel waves goodbye to Leigh upon reaching her locker, opening it and digging around inside. She exchanges a couple books in her pink backpack for others, then adjusts her ladybug headband using the hanging mirror inside the locker door. Her eyes mosey over the various things she's decorated her locker with—feathers, jewels, stickers, pictures of her and her friends, magazine cutouts, a picture of her, Dipper, Stan and Soos posing in front of the Mystery Shack—finally landing on a picture of her and Aiden. She bites her lip and her hand darts out to seize the photo out of its place and stuff it into a pile of unorganized papers at the bottom of her locker. When she stands back up, someone taps her shoulder.

The teenaged girl turns to see her brother leaning against the locker next to hers, ball cap on his head, a strap of his backpack slung casually over one shoulder. The hallway bustle goes dull in her ears for just a second, her heart fluttering.

“Hey Mabel,” Dipper says, giving her another one of those meaningful smiles he's been shooting at her all day.

Mabel sends one right back at him, tapping his arm with a friendly fist. “Heyyy, you.”

The two of them have only been in a—she squeals inwardly—*relationship* for two full days, but she can already see a change in Dipper. An invisible kink has been knocked out of his back, and the dark circles under his eyes seem much less noticeable, now that they don't have to tiptoe around each other anymore; now that the constant fog of fear between them has evaporated, and there are no more secrets. Romantic stuff aside, he's acting like himself around her again, she can tell, and it makes her so screamin' happy, she can barely contain it.

Admittedly it is kinda weird having a boyfriend she can't tell anyone about... especially when her previous relationship was pretty much everybody's business. Keeping a secret *this* big and important from *everybody* is a little daunting when she thinks about it too hard. But he's so worth it.

And on the other hand, there's something about having a *secret* boyfriend that's sort of thrilling, hidden meaning inside their public interactions that leave her feeling warm and floaty. She thinks of earlier, during her and Dipper's only shared class, 1st period English. They always sit next to each other in the back row of desks pushed together in twos (even when they weren't really speaking, 'cause moving desks is a pain, yo), so no one was behind them to see her pinkie stroke his in the middle of class, under the pretense of reaching for her fuzzy purple pen that just *happened* to roll over to where her twin's hand was resting on the desk (she'd flicked it over there). Dipper's eyes had glanced over to meet hers for not even a full second before they shot back down to the thick book that held the play they were reading aloud in class that day. But his cheeks held the tiniest hint of color, and he hadn't moved his hand away. And if she's lame for getting such a rush from English class pinkie touching, then so be it.

“You good to get outta here?” Dipper asks.

“Mmmyeah, but don’t you have Mathletes on Mondays?”

“Eh, I was thinking I’d ditch today.”

“Ooh, look at you all rebellious.” She grins at him and pushes her locker door shut. “Alright, sure bruhbs, lez ditch this popsicle stand.”

The two siblings walk side by side through the halls, filling each other in about their days. Mabel tells Dipper about how she totally killed it in improv during drama class earlier, reenacting all the funniest parts of the scene for him, pointedly avoiding a mention of Aiden-math-class-weirdness (her bro gets all stiff and tight-lipped whenever the subject of her ex comes up, so she tries to keep Aiden-related talk to the absolute bare minimum). Once they’re out the front doors of the school, they hold their backpacks over their heads and sprint their way through the vast junior class parking lot, fat raindrops pelting them as they race for their old, well-loved blue minivan. Hidden inside the maze of vehicles and cloaked by the misty rain, when she’s sure no one else is walking by, Mabel steals a peck to Dipper’s cheek. He stutters, scolds her lightly for it, but looks pleased anyway.

Turns out neither of them are in the mood to go straight home on this rainy Monday. They swing by a drive thru instead and Dipper buys them Pitts and sundaes, before driving to a nearby park that they’ve been going to since they were little kids. The parking lot is empty aside from one other car—probably because of the rain—and Dipper eases their van into a corner spot, as far away from it as he can get.

At first Mabel proposes a frolic-in-the-rain walk, but he shoots her down, whining something about the rain and pneumonia. So she relaxes back into her seat, flicking off her shoes to prop her bare feet up on the dashboard, loudly devouring her strawberry ice cream. Dipper falls into another one of his rants about the latest way he was wronged by his creepy, out-to-get-him, weird-haircutted, totally-unfair-grader of an AP US history teacher, talking with his hands without realizing it, making her giggle. It’s not long before her rather large cup becomes empty, aside from some pink dribble at the bottom.

“—Completely evil, like no joke, I don’t even know if this is worth the college credit anymore. I bet you anything the guy has like, a refrigerator full of body parts in his basement or something.” Dipper audibly shivers. “Eugh, you can see it in his dead, hollow eyes—”

“I need sugarrrrrr,” Mabel whines, interrupting her brother mid-sentence, bouncing in her seat. “Sugarsugarsugar.”

“Were you even listening to anything I said?”

“Ayup, bodies in Mr. Yanovich’s fridge. Now give me sugar. Gimmegimme. Ahhh,” she opens her mouth and madly points inside with both fingers.

Dipper takes another bite from his own cup of chocolate vanilla swirl, rolling his eyes and talking over the spoon in his mouth. “Jeez Mabel, I already got you your own monster-sized ice cream, you’re not getting any of mine.” He takes out the spoon and points it accusingly in her direction. “The amount of sugar you regularly consume in a day scares me. You need an intervention.”

Mabel gives him a look and swipes a finger along the bottom of her empty cup. “Uhhm, I wasn’t talking about *that* kind of sugar, bro.” And the melted ice cream-covered finger gets popped in her mouth.

Maybe she *might* be selling the finger-lickin’ show a little too hard. It’s hard to tell. Obvious, outright *flirting* with Dipper is still new to her, and Mabel is still in the process of feeling out what she’s comfortable with, stuff he likes, what he’s into. But if this is overkill, she really doesn’t care, because she’s loving the way he reacts to her anyway—his eyes all wide and his face all ‘*doiinii*’ and goofy, how he turns pink as he watches her slowly draw her clean finger out from between her lips, his jaw hanging open a little.

“O-oh?” comes Dipper’s delayed response, a couple seconds after her finger leaves her mouth with a ‘*pop.*’

“*Mhmm.*” Back into the cup the finger goes. This time she uses it to dab melted strawberry ice cream on the tip of Dipper’s nose, lunging with a squawk of laughter to lick it off before he can really react. He makes a face, snapping out of wherever his brain just went.

“Eww. No nose licking allowed.”

“Hey, I’ll lick your nose if I wanna, pal,” Mabel declares, her face still hovering in front of his, right before she surges forward to give him a hard, quick, strawberry kiss on the lips. She darts away almost as soon she swooped in, and Dipper’s neck cranes across the center console after her as he tries his damndest to catch her retreating mouth with his—but he can’t quite keep up. Mabel dissolves into snorty giggles when they both open their eyes and realize how awkwardly far he’s leaning into her seat space, while Dipper hurriedly moves back into his own seat, looking flustered.

“Uhm—right, so,” he says in an overly casual, clearly-trying-to-save-face way, “were we done with that for now, or—”

“I’m sorry, did you want to *share* with me, now?” Mabel teases, crossing her arms, sniffing and turning away from him, “I thought you said I wasn’t getting any sugar? Come on, now you’re just flip-flopping on me, bro. I don’t know what to think anymore.”

His mouth opens, and he points an accusing finger at her—and then his mouth snaps shut, and the pointing hand flops into his lap, his blushing face an annoyed, deadpan expression of defeat. He sighs through his nose, squinting at her as he tries to figure her out. Mabel grants herself a single victory smile, but afterwards cuts her beautifully-awk brother some slack, leaning back towards him and grabbing his hand. The poor guy is still so hesitant

about initiating stuff with her, which is pretty much all her fault, so she could probably stand to let up with the teasing (it's so *hard* to remember to do that though, messing with Dipper is like second nature to her).

"Just kidding, you know I'm all for some Dip-lip-action right now. Like, a hundred-ten-percent *alllll* for it," a sultry smile spreads across Mabel's face, one eyebrow cocking. "Honestly, I'm kinda surprised we didn't start makin' out as soon as we parked. I mean, I just assumed that's why you drove us out here."

His face looks caught in some odd limbo between guilty and about to laugh. "I was... waiting for the right moment."

"Uh huh. Well, obviously."

She cups his cheeks, pulling his warm, adorable lips onto hers with a pleased, "*Hmmm*." Dipper responds instantly, his fingers reaching up to skim her jaw and thread through her hair as he presses into her with such enthusiasm that she's almost thrown off balance. She giggles against his mouth, grabbing his shoulders and kissing him harder because he is obviously in need of a reminder who the alpha twin is, here.

When they part with a wet smacking noise, Mabel's ladybug headband is crooked, while Dipper's hat has mysteriously disappeared from his head.

"Wanna backseat it?" she asks with an eyebrow wiggle, breathless.

"You know I do," Dipper says cheerfully, wearing a grin that shows off teeth.

They clamber into the backseat of their van, Dipper's ice cream long forgotten on the dashboard, laughing and climbing all over one another. Eventually Dipper gets himself situated in the middle seat and Mabel plops herself down in his lap, the fabric of her flowy skirt draping over his legs, his hands resting on her hips. The laughter dies away, her brother taking in a shuddering breath as she gently brushes her nails down the front of his shirt.

Mabel smiles knowingly at him, and sweetly leans in for a kiss.

Things get pretty quiet aside from the sound of raindrops hitting the roof of the van. His tongue finds its way into her mouth, and she sighs in approval.

They ease apart, silly grins spread across their blushing faces. "Now *those* are the noms I been craving," Mabel says quietly, making Dipper's smile stretch even wider before he eagerly leans in for more.

Kissing him feels as good as it always does. And he tastes like ice cream which is a bonus. But as the minutes pass and Dipper's hands have still strayed no further than her back and waist, Mabel is left almost squirming in her seat, aching to take things at least just a *little* further.

She sighs inwardly. They've made out a pretty decent amount since Friday night and by now she can't help but notice that her bro seems to be making a conscious effort to take things super-sloth-slow, this time around. Ahemhem. As in, *physically*. Seriously. Not even a single boob graze has taken place. Dippinsauce has unmistakably been keepin' those hands to himself.

Yeah, it's only been a few days. And sure, Mabel understands his reasoning. Look what happened last time, they took things at lightning speed and then everything went sour, yadayadayada. But man, there were extenuating circumstances wrapped up in that whole mess—ones that have been very much resolved—so for Pete's sake, she's already had a taste of the good stuff and now she just wants him to touch her already... c'mon, she knows for a fact Dipper's got it in 'im! She wants to feel his hands on her skin again, she wants to hear him make those breathy noises and see that ugly-cute face she's always thinking about late at night... sweet Moses, she wants it an embarrassing amount, so *dang it*, it's time to get this here show on the road!

With plenty of desire to fuel her confidence, Mabel lifts herself up for a second only to scoot forward and sit right back down on her twin's crotch, pressing their hips together. She has to stifle a laugh—well wouldn'tcha know it, he's already hard. Looks like she was not wrong about Dipper holding back. The dork.

"M-mmh—" Dipper's fingers tighten on her waist, his lips detaching from hers to breathe out shakily. Mabel moves back. His brown eyes peek open and he looks at her with this half guilty, half hopeful, and fully adorable lopsided grin, his face all flushed. Oof. That grin *does* things to her, man. She quirks a 'gotcha' eyebrow at him, smiling back a little bit shyly.

"Haha, yeahh," he says, turning red. "Sorry, I'm a little—"

Mabel definitely does not want to hear her brother finish apologizing for poking her ('cos seriously man, bring on the bro-ner pokes!), so to shut him up she slowly, slooowly rocks on him again, keeping her eyes fixed on his. To his credit Dipper shuts right up with the apology, finally getting the picture. Instead she manages to get a soft moan out of him, which leaves her feeling both victorious and very, *very* fired up.

Uhhh, yeah. She's definitely gonna need more of that stuff right there. A-s-a-p, dawg.

As if reading her mind, Dipper grips her waist and rolls up his hips, the bulge in his shorts rubbing under the folds of her skirt in *just* the right spot. She gasps out a giggle, scratching her nails down his chest again. Dipper bites down hard on his lower lip.

"Oh man, Mabels, you're killin' me," he whispers, his eyelids fluttering shut.

Mabel responds with quiet-yet-villainous laughter, peppering kisses all over his face. "Yesss, goooood."

He bucks again a bit over-excitedly and sort of misses the mark—thrust-gone-rogue—and she can't help but snort another louder laugh. Dipper goes redder and laughs breathily, "Hey, shut up." But the third time he does it, he sure as heck does *not* miss; Mabel visibly shudders and sighs, her fingers grabbing out of their own accord to clutch the upholstery of the seat behind his shoulders. O-oh, heck yea... now this is more like it. Mabel hums out a little sensual giggle as she nips at his earlobe, then presses her lips to his neck, feeling him shiver. His skin is warm and sort of clammy. He's definitely on the verge of breaking out into a sweat.

She takes a small patch of said clammy skin between her teeth, and as soon as she starts to lightly suck, his hips jerk again. This time she meets him halfway, grinding down hard and rocking back and forth as he arches himself up.

"Ah, shit," Dipper hisses, his head falling back against the top of the tiny middle-seat headrest, while she throws herself into kissing him up and down his neck. She can feel him throb through his shorts where he's pressed snugly against the crotch of her underwear. He's super-duper hard. Ohhh snap.

"Mmmshorts—lose the shorts, bro—chop chop, make haste, pleeease," Mabel sing-song whines, quickly scooching back on his thighs and leaning against one of the front seats as she waits for the unnecessary shorts to be poofed away, her eyes closed and her breathing heavy.

"R-right—yes, yeah," Dipper stammers, already fumbling with his belt.

Dang. Well clearly it's been too long since they last felt each other in this particular way, because not even thirty seconds later Dipper's shorts are down around his ankles and Mabel's skirt is bunched up at the waist and both their hips are rocking pretty hard and fast, nothin' but thin cotton underwear keeping them apart from the good stuff (she knows she must be *really* in the mood because she has zero urge to give Dip a hard time about his tighty-whities, seriously, none at all, it's a miracle). His lips seek out hers again and again for wet, searing, impatient kisses, the kind of kisses that leave Mabel breathless and giddy, the kind that make her want to moan aloud.

"I missed you," he pants against her mouth the next time they break apart. Mabel feels herself blush and throb at the words, knowing *exactly* what he meant by that.

"Mm—I missed you too—" she barely finishes getting out the words before Dipper frantically mashes their lips together again.

After all those nights with only her fingers and memory-Dipper for company—where she would desperately try to recall the exact way he felt, but always sort of miss the mark—the feeling of real-life Dipper, all warm and thick and moving between her legs, even if it's just the outline of him through fabric, is *mind-numbingly* satisfying. It fogs up her head, consumes her whole body with a rosy, blissful heat, making her feel all tingly and floaty and like *nothing* can bring her down. Soon she's hearing herself whine, "Why aren't you

touching me. Touch me,” her voice dreamy and faraway to her own ears. Before he can say a word she kisses him deeply and says, “I want you,” then another wet kiss happens (he moans through that one), with one more whisper, “to touch me,” after that.

Hooboy. Aroused, walkin-on-air Mabel sure is forward. But real-life Dipper sure is into it, so it all works out. The movement of his hips falters as he rasps out a high-pitched, barely audible, “Oh my god, Mabel,” under his breath as she feels his length twitch between her legs again, the twitchiest twitch she’s felt so far, which is, *guh*, an illegal amount of hot. Dip opens his eyes halfway and nods at her, his eyes looking pretty darn foggy, too. He might’ve kept going with the dumbstruck nodding forever if she hadn’t reached up and taken his face in her hands, stilling him, giggling softly. He seems to come back to himself a little and breathes out a quiet, sort of choked giggle as well.

Their foreheads press together, and Mabel closes her eyes, snaking her arms around his neck, leaning into him. His hands, only a little bit shaky, brush down along the hem of her baby blue tank top, before they slip underneath it. Very, very delicately, he traces his fingers up the soft skin of her tummy, trickles them along her ribs, runs his hands down her sides and back up. His palms are damp, and his hips have stilled, as if all his focus is being dedicated to the feel of her skin, but she doesn’t mind the sweaty hands (her brother’s hands are always sweaty, it’s just the way of the world, she’s used to it) and fills the achy void of movement between them by rolling her hips over him in slow, deep little circles.

He groans and quickly closes the gap between their lips, heatedly rolling their tongues together. There’s one last second of hesitation before his hands push the cups of her bra up and out of the way—a hallelujah choir of *‘fnallyyy*’s sings out in her head—then Mabel is blissfully floating on a high all over again as Dipper touches her all over, thoroughly reacquainting himself with every inch of her skin. His hands are gentle and careful as usual, but a jittery sort of careful that gives away how excited he is. It’s obvious in the way their kiss grows more passionate, too. A gasp gets roused out of her when he rolls her nipples around under his thumbs, pinches them gently, lets them catch between each of his fingers as he glides his hands back and forth.

“Dip,” is all she can manage. Dipper responds to the tiny whimper by fully cupping her breasts in his slightly-damp palms, squeezing as hard as he dares (which turns out is still pretty dern softly). She moans into his mouth ‘cause that feels way too good, crazy good, *god*, she missed his hands.

Filled with confidence by the hushed, yearning sounds her brother keeps making in his throat, Mabel breaks their kiss to do the best improvised bend-and-snap she can do from this position, her head flinging back with the sexiest whimper she has to offer, some of her long brown curls sort of clocking him in the face on the upswing. Whoopsie. Her flair might’ve been a tad overdone there, but whatevs, Dipper eats it up like cake anyway, kneading her breasts and breathing out a low, whispery, “*Yeah*,” that she’ll probably poke fun at him for later, but right now, hellzyea, she’s into the Dip-talk. Feeling an overwhelming need to have his mouth on her neck, she quickly lets her head fall to one side with a small whine, hoping he’ll take the bait. And *bless* that predictable boy, he does, like so fast it’s kinda hilarious

actually, drawn to it like a magnet, lavishing her skin with his lips and tongue and teeth and inciting the vague thought that she'll prooobably have to slather on the coverup tomorrow before school, but who the frig cares, she's kiiinda in heaven at the moment.

They pick up the pace, returning to their roots and grinding against each other with that distinct air of two dorks who are pent-up as heck. Dipper's hands switched gears and found their way down to her butt about half a minute ago, and they still have yet to let go, clutching her as far onto his lap as physically possible as he thrusts his hips and breathes hard into her neck. Meanwhile Mabel's face is all kinds of red and she is *all* kinds of hot-n-bothered, because The Bootie Touching™ is starting to feel a little hotter and more assertive than anything she's felt from Mr. Gentle-McCarefulhands over there before—oh-ho, a tad possessive too—apparently she is into that, because here come the words, uh oh, hot-n-bothered word-type-things are bubbling up can't stop 'em, oh jeez please at least be sexy words—

“Ahhhhffuudge, ohh, *mm*, Dipdon'tstop—”

Ah, phew. Words-type-things sufficiently sexy. Dipper groans a curse under his breath at the sound of her fast-talking, then sighs out her name in this *super* needy-sounding way right before he lifts his hands off her butt only to bring them swiftly back down again and grab on tight. The faint slapping sound that results is immediately followed by Mabel's eyes popping open, a breathless squeak flying out of her mouth—*ohmygoddidhejust—mmhm yesthatboydid—*

Her eyes squeeze closed again and she holds him tighter, the shirt fabric on the backs of his shoulders clutched hard in her fists. She buries her face in his neck, too, where she makes sure to give him kisses whenever she's not busy shuddering or whimpering or just trying to focus on hanging on for the ride, 'cause the Dips here has kinda taken charge and he's the one doing most of the dirty work, now. *Ohh wowie*—like he has found his rub-a-dub-rhythm and he is truckin', man—oh wowwowwow she could get used to this.

“Fuck, Mabel, I-I'm close,” he gasps.

The sound of her whispered name on his lips is heavenly. So's that desperate tremble in his voice. Mabel's knees start to dig into the seat belt buckles on either side of Dipper's fast-moving hips, but the dull pain barely registers. Her cloudy brain also fails to register the orgasm-ahoy warning, too caught up in the idea of recreating a scene from one of her favorite romance movies, wherein she just rips his shirt open so that buttons fly everywhere, because man she's always wanted to try that, and also his dorky underwear, it really need to go, like *now*, hers too for that matter (not dorky but still needs to be gone)—*hey so can our second time be in the backseat of a van please oh please let their second time be in the backseat of a van—*

“Wait, w-wait—” Just as Mabel moves her jittery hands forward to follow through with the shirt-ripping plan Dipper comes to a screeching halt with the unbridled dry humping, his body freezing up beneath her, his hands swiftly moving to her shoulders to push her away and hold her at arm's length.

“Wh—” Her surprised (and maybe a little hurt) voice comes out as this breathless croak thing at first, and Mabel swallows and licks her lips, trying again. “What the heck, Dip?”

All she hears is their labored panting and the rain as Dipper nervously shifts his eyes right and left before answering. “Sorry... s-sorry I just... I thought I heard a car pull up,” he says finally, face burning red as he tries to catch his breath. Suddenly the idea she had ten seconds ago—the one where she was gonna rip the rest of her super-secret boyfriend’s clothes off and ride him ‘til kingdom come out in the open of a public parking lot (in a van that doesn’t even have tinted windows)—seems kinda stupid.

Which is *frustrating*. ‘Cause realizing how risky her plan was doesn’t change the fact that she’s still aching to jump those nerd bones of his. Curses.

She gnaws on her bottom lip, following Dipper’s gaze towards the window on her left, but all there is to see is a few raindrops cutting paths down a solid layer of mist on the glass. “I don’t see anyone...”

“Oh shit,” Dipper laughs, “we fogged up the friggin’ windows.”

“Hmm, are we being obvious? Is it obvious there are two rrrrandy teens in the back of this van?” Mabel cups her hands around her mouth and calls out to no one, “Will somebody open a window please!”

“Mabel! Shh!” Dipper orders through stifled laughter, twisting his neck this way and that. “Man, if there is someone out there, we wouldn’t even be able to see them until they were right on us.” She catches his eye the next time he turns his head, and he stills, looking sheepish. “Sorry, I know, I’m paranoid...”

“Maaaybe we should temporarily put a lid on this fire. Pick it back up somewhere else. At a later time.”

“Y-yeah... yeah, you’re probably right. Ah, man,” Dipper frowns and closes his eyes, breathing out heavily as if it truly pained him to have to say that. Mabel gets a heck of a kick out of how disappointed he looks and can’t help but tease him.

“Uh-uh, no frowns now, only smiles! Booooop,” the tips of her index fingers stretch the corners of his mouth into an unwilling non-smile on his deadpan face. She *tut-tuts* at him. “I rate this smile a one-point-three out of ten. Abysmal. As a smile enthusiast I’m unimpressed, but as your sister I am scandalized. Surely you can’t be so indecently affected by widdle ol’ me?” She puts a finger to her chin and innocently bats her eyelashes. He waves her off, grinning and rolling his eyes.

“Nooooo, not at *all*. And I definitely didn’t just almost lose it in my pants, either.”

Mabel blushes and barks out a laugh, still not used to hearing Dipper say stuff like that to her so casually—not that she’s not totally cool with it, or anything. “Huh. Well maybe it’s a good thing we stopped when we did, then.”

As she snorts out giggles at Dipper's embarrassed half-glare she can't help but slither her hand down to stroke her nails over the still-prominent bulge in his underwear (Dipper sharply sucks in air through his teeth) before giving it light, friendly pats, as if she's petting a puppy's head. "There there, my eager lil' friendo. *Weeee'll meet again, don't know where, don't know whennn—*"

Dipper cuts off her mini-serenade by gently grabbing her wrist, his eyes scrunched closed, his voice pinched and just a tad high pitched, "Haha, thaats enough of that now, Mabels. Torturing me is really not necessary. And you know what, I'm gonna go ahead and veto the name '*lil' friendo*' right now."

"Pshh. As if you have the power to veto weiner nicknames. Keep dreamin', bro."

She shakes with silent laughter, mercifully taking her hand off him to pap his cheeks and kiss the tip of his nose with a '*muah.*' Dipper gives her what she takes as an I'm-vaguely-annoyed-at-you-but-damn-you're-cute look before he hunches forward to rest his forehead on her shoulder. A melodramatic sigh gusts out of him, tickling the skin on her clavicle. "Dammit. We need to find some more stable make out spots. This is kinda painful." He proceeds to mumble, "*Jeff the gnome in a squirrel bath,*" over and over to himself, making Mabel laugh out loud and flick his burning ear.

"Aw, don't you worry your giant head about it, brother," she speaks over his cool down mantra. "I'm sure we will. And hey, we'll always have our good ol' bedrooms to fall back on. Well. At least when no one's home. Or awake."

Dipper nods, but still looks so hilariously disappointed. She stretches her arm towards a window, determined to cheer him up.

"Yo bro-bro. Check it." Mabel proceeds to drag her hand down the glass, leaving a long, clear trail behind it. At the bottom near the classically provocative handprint she can't help but add a smiley face with bug-eyes and a suggestive tongue.

"Was that supposed to be a *Titanic* reference? The weird smiley face is throwing me off."

Lowering her eyelids, she tickles her fingers up the sides of his face, then waving her hands suggestively along her curves, lowering her voice to an overly-husky octave. "Don't fret, Jack. You can '*take me to the stars*' later. Wink-wonkkk." After some furious wink action Mabel taps her chin in thought. "And hey, maybe after we get back from the stars we can watch some *Hank's Hotdogs* or a movie or something? I don't know, light-speed travel will really take it out of ya, we'll have to play it by ear."

Dipper, who'd been nodding along oh-so seriously while trying (and mostly failing) to smother his grin, finally snorts. "You're a dork," he says. She scoffs and blows a raspberry, and he just giggles some more. The sound tingles through Mabel's eardrums, making her feel even more ridiculously happy than she already is.

Riding freely on that joyful high, she leans in close, gently brushing aside the messy brown curls hanging over his ear, her other hand stroking the soft hairs at the nape of his neck. “Hi. Hey. You with the Dipper-face. I love you,” she murmurs, pressing her lips right to his ear, her voice dropping to a whisper. “I love you a whole hecka lot, Dip.” And unlike the last time they were in this position, when the room was dark and her heart was so unsure, Mabel says it like she means it, no chance for a misunderstanding of exactly what kind of love she’s talking about. It’s the whole package, man. All the kinds. She knows that for sure now.

It’s the first time she’s said it since prom night confession time, and Mabel can hear Dipper’s breath hitch. She pulls back to find him beaming at her. It’s contagious.

“Annnd you love me too,” she hedges with a giggle, poking him repeatedly in the chest.

He raises an eyebrow, his lips pursing in mock skepticism. “Uhh, I don’t know if I’m totally sure how I feel right now? I might need to get back to you on that one. . .”

Her jaw drops, and she sways back in his lap, guffawing. “Woah! *Wow*, tasteless joke alert!” Dipper starts to laugh as she twists and turns to address the other empty seats in their old van while pointing at his head. “Attention all van patrons, we got a tasteless joker here! I repeat, a tasteless joker! Booooo!” He lightly slaps away the finger in his face and sticks out his tongue. Mabel finally stops wiggling, sending a wry smile his way. “Yeah too soon man. Too soon.”

He smirks back at her, teeth and all. Then his arms encircle her back, reeling her in until there’s a pair of fervent lips fitted to hers. Mabel’s eyes flutter closed and her brain floats away as her new secret boyfriend proceeds to kiss her so mercilessly that her toes have curled inside her sparkly purple shoes by the time it’s over. She’s actually lightheaded when Dipper pulls back a few centimeters, just far enough for him to speak. Well so much for cooling down. . .

“Annnd I love you too,” he says quietly, their lips grazing together at each word.

Her heartbeat is through the friggin’ roof. All Mabel can do is giggle stupidly, cheeks ridiculously flushed, fingers dancing in his shaggy hair. Wuh-wuh-*wowzers*. Who knew this kid could be so romantic? Well technically, *she* did, because there have consistently been moments like these—the ones that make her melt into ooey-gooney puddle of goop—with every more-than-just-sibs encounter they’ve had so far.

But it still kind of surprises her every time, in a good way. Like, this is the same guy who used to cry whenever she accidentally went a little too hard with wedgie-giving during the impromptu twin-wrestling matches.

“What the heckers, Dip,” Mabel laughs breathlessly. “How did you get to be such a good kisser? It’s ridonkulous.”

He grins ear to ear like a kid, sitting up a little straighter and prouder in his seat. “You think I’m a good kisser?”

“... Maybe,” Mabel waves her hand flippantly, “I dunno. Eh.”

“Nope, too late, already said it.” Dipper wraps his arms around her in a playful bear hug and brings their faces close together as Mabel squirms and giggles, puckering his lips to give her light pecks in between “No,” “take,” and “backs.”

Movement enters her peripherals and they both turn to see two cars parking just a couple of spots down from them. Mabel sighs, adjusting her bra back into place, beginning her descent from her throne on Dipper’s lap; might as well do it now before Captain Paranoia over there inevitably suggests it anyway. No big deal though, she gets it. Too many people know them in this town.

Mabel climbs back into the front seat, propping her feet up on the dashboard as Dipper finishes zipping up his shorts and scrambles back over the center console after her. Swiveling her head around to gaze out of her now only slightly foggy window, she watches a group of people she’s pretty sure are seniors from their high school exit their vehicles and saunter over to one of the nearby picnic pavilions.

“Hey, you still wanna go for a walk?” Dipper asks once he gets situated, hooking his hat back on his head. She twists to look dubiously at him over her shoulder, one eyebrow raised.

“Whatever happened to, *‘nyehh, we don’t have an umbrella Mabellll, we’ll catch pneumonia and die Mabellll, Mom and Dad’ll have to pay for a double funeral and that’s just too expensive Mabellll—’*”

“—You’re putting words in my mouth, as usual.”

She snorts, flashing a mouthful of straight, pearly white teeth, wriggling her feet back into her shoes. “Yeah, barely!”

He gives her shoulder a light shove by force of habit, then takes her hand in his slightly sweaty one, weaving their fingers together. “Well the rain’s kinda died down a bit. And what the hell, I’m feeling daring today.”

“Says the guy who once jumped off a cliff for me about walking in the rain.”

“Yyyup.”

“The Dips has spokennn! Rainy afternoon park walk it is, then.” She squeezes their hands before they break their hold on one another, pushing out of their respective doors. Tiny droplets mist down on the twins as they randomly choose one of the park’s many hiking paths and start walking.

As soon as they’re out of sight of the picnic benches where those seniors have settled into talking and smoking, Dipper is reaching for her hand again. She playfully bumps her hip against his, he scoffs and bumps hers back, and soon they’re bantering and laughing about nothing in particular. The drizzle eventually mats their hair to their foreheads and weighs down their clothes, but Mabel’s heart feels lighter than air.

by Double Pines

Breaking Point

He finds them cleaning up his room one day, kicked up amongst the junk under his bed.

Cleaning of any kind isn't the usual sort of activity Dipper Pines spends his precious free time doing. But earlier that afternoon his mom had finally put her foot down, shoved a laundry basket into his hands, and told him he was not to show his face until that basket was full of the dirty clothes strewn all over his room. Not the first time he's received this particular ultimatum from his mother, and Dipper still isn't on board with the logic behind being forced to clean his room. It's not like anyone has to live in here but him. And he *happens* to feel at home in his messy living space, thank-you-very-much.

Grumbling, he picks up the obvious stuff that sits out in the open first—handfuls of flannel and questionably-smelling t-shirts and jeans that have long passed their bi-weekly date with the washing machine, socks that are all somehow missing their counterparts, underwear he'd forgotten he even owned. The annoyance dies down when he ends up finding some good stuff he hasn't seen in a while, like his *Fargo* shirt, or his favorite green pullover that he thought he'd lost a long time ago. That's what breaks Dipper down enough to be at least *willing* to take look at the enigmatic chaos that is the area underneath his bed. Eh. He's already stuck cleaning. Might as well be thorough and possibly recover more of his long lost clothing.

He kneels down, stooping to lift up the blue comforter hanging in the way and peek disinterestedly into the dark depths beyond. His eyebrows raise when a glimpse of glaring pink jumps out at him from the rest of the dingy under-the-bed mess. Batting aside a rubik's cube, a dirty sneaker, and a worn paperback copy of *Cosmos*, he reveals the item in question—man, it's really stuffed in there good, a few inches of pink whatever-it-is peeking out from in between the box that contains his coin collection (which includes that ancient pewter one from Gravity Falls that he's ninety-nine-percent sure is still extremely cursed) and a stack of old newspapers that all share the same August 2012 issue date (ongoing investigation, details are need-to-know). It doesn't really occur to him what exactly he's found until he closes his hand around it, pulling it out to take a closer look. A split second later it gets dropped to the floor and Dipper is on his feet again, his mouth going dry as he stares down at his discovery.

It's a pair of panties. And they're Mabel's.

The very same ones he watched her take off hurriedly, in his bed, with him, right before they...

He blinks. As much as he hates to admit it, every single detail of that night has pretty much been burned into his brain, so there's no mistaking this. That is definitely Mabel's underwear. Right there at his feet. Staring up at him in all its gaudy pink-hearted glory.

Dipper swallows, hard.

She must have accidentally left them while trying to sneak out of his room the morning after. And then forgotten about them. And now, almost three weeks later, here they are.

His mouth purses into a tight, thin line. Dipper's knee-jerk reaction is to turn sharply towards the laundry basket full of his dirty clothes. A plan, a good, rational sort of plan that he's proud of himself for coming up with forms in his head. He could just throw them in the hamper now (making sure to put them with Mabel's laundry and *not* his), and no one would be the wiser that he'd had a pair of his sister's dirty underwear under his bed for the last few weeks. Yes. That would be the smart thing to do. The right thing to do. And it would certainly coincide nicely with his other current and much more pressing plans. The get-over-your-sister-or-else ones.

The teenaged boy stands there frozen for a few more seconds, before the usual amount of paranoia sets in and Dipper instinctively glances over his shoulder at his bedroom door. It's closed. Quickly he mentally pages through the current locations of each one of his family members. Mom, out picking up dinner, Dad, halfway through mowing the lawn. Mabel... still over at her boyfriend's.

He looks back down at the pink underwear on the carpet. Somehow his mouth becomes even drier, so dry that when he opens his mouth to take in a shallow breath, there's a mildly uncomfortable, weird unsticking sensation in his lips.

With only *slightly* trembling hands, Dipper bends to pick up the soft, delicate garment. Last time he saw these, he was too distracted by what was underneath them to pay much attention to the panties themselves. Stretching them out a little between his hands, he studies them silently, his heart pounding. They're bright, bright pink, dotted all over with pink hearts that are a darker, richer shade of pink, and coated with a faint sheen of pink glitter. They're just... they're very pink. And they've got a bit of a lace trim. Which is also pink. He almost grazes a thumb over the crotch of them, but stops. He then proceeds to have an unintentional staring contest with them, until eventually he feels a twitch down below, upon which he immediately drops them again, grimacing to himself.

No no, nope. Not this shit again. Stop being a creep, Dipper. Put them in the laundry basket, Dipper. Now.

He swipes them back up, intending to do just that, stalking towards the basket full of clothes a few feet away. Here we go. Into the laundry basket. Dipper lifts his hand to drop them in, the underwear dangling from his thumb. Okay. He's putting them in. Before, that was just a little hiccup. Operation purge-self-of-any-and-all-inappropriate-Mabel-feelings is still in tact.

Now, drop them, Dipper inwardly orders himself, like he's speaking to a dog.

And he almost does. But at the last second he spins on his heel and fast-walks over to the other side of the bedroom, shoving the panties into the small, dark, unassuming crevice between his bed and his nightstand.

Afterwards Dipper calmly goes to pick up the basket of clothes, shunning thoughts of what he's just done and the reasons why he did it with every last drop of his brainpower. He walks down the upstairs hallway and yanks open the double doors to their tiny laundry room, mechanically dumping his clothes in the washer without bothering to separate them, adding probably much more detergent than necessary, and starting the timer. Stiffly walking back to his room, Dipper slumps down in his desk chair and pulls out his math notebook to get started on the ridiculous load of AP calc homework he'd been assigned earlier that day. He meticulously and methodically works through numbers 43 through 65 on page 137, odd problems only, without break, his pencil with the chewed off eraser scribbling, his calculator tapping. He forgoes his usual habit of playing chill music while he does his homework in favor of working in a sobering silence. The entire time he tries to pretend he's not hyper-aware of what now lies between his bed and his nightstand, and fails.

For the first few days after his little discovery, Dipper stays strong. A sad, unfitting choice of words when 'staying strong' refers to 'not doing anything weird and/or gross with a pair of girl's underwear he had all but stolen from his sister,' but, it is what it is.

But a wrench gets thrown into his plans of self-restraint the following Friday. To be honest the day had bad omens written all over it. Clouds that threatened an annoying drizzle stubbornly fogged up the sky, the temperature oddly cool for April weather in mid-Cali. His alarm had for whatever reason failed to go off that morning, making him late for homeroom and earning him a tardy demerit (Mabel used to be the one who'd pop her head in his room and make sure he was awake on school days, but clearly that habit of hers is not a thing anymore), and in his haste to leave the house Dipper didn't realize he'd left the folder that held his ten page research paper for history—the one that was fifteen percent of his grade for the year and due that morning in 4th period, no exceptions—on the kitchen table. And later he trips over his own feet in the hallway right in front of a crowd of giggling girls, then pulls a long, gross hair out of his sandwich at lunch, and a couple of his buddies apparently have chosen today to be general dicks in terms of making Dipper the butt of every joke-of-the-day, and... it's just an awful, shitty day. So when the final bell rings, all Dipper wants is to go home, throw on a hoodie, curl up in bed and watch Netflix until he passes out. Luckily on Fridays he's got nothing going on after-school-activities-wise, allowing him to do just that.

Dipper skips the usual locker small talk with his couple of friends, keeping his head down, actively avoiding eye contact with anybody and everybody until he finds himself at his usual spot at the back of the junior lot, never so happy to see that crappy old paint-chipped van of his. He's just buckled his seat belt and turned the key in the ignition when the bad omens of the day culminate with Mabel running into view, waving her hands around with a sheepish smile on her face, Aiden trotting at her heels.

Damn. He just can't catch a fucking break today, can he?

As usual Dipper's (stupid, irritating) heart has a mind of its own, and inflates at the sight of her, but then of course plummets at the sight of who she's with. That usual overall nervousness he feels at the prospect of being near Mabel these days settles over his skin like a fidgety blanket. Since they only have English class on every other Friday, Dipper hasn't seen his sister at all today. A glimpse of the back of her head across the crowded cafeteria doesn't count. The first thought that pops into his head is that she looks cute, wearing that light blue sweatshirt of hers with the sparkly-anime-eyed cat face on the front. Under that she has on a purple tee with the Tootsie Pop owl on it under a romper that she tie-dyed herself, her curly hair in a loose braid that bounces over her shoulder. There's a lime green head band on her head, a sticker of a cartoon raspberry giving a thumbs up sign stuck to one rosy cheek, and gloss on her lips. As she gets closer, Dipper's second thought is that no wait, she looks beautiful, his third thought barging in right after that, squashing down the previous sappy sentiment with something along the lines of *god just shut the fuck up*. He gives his head a small shake, and dutifully rolls the window down when Mabel runs up and tap-tap-taps on it with a sparkly blue fingernail.

"Hi," she says breathlessly, continuing to speak quickly before he can even say anything. "How's it goin' Dip? Um, so, Aiden's car won't start again, and we're kinda supposed to be at his house in like twenty minutes for—well, eh, it's not really important, I just figured, it'd be easier if you could maybe give us a ride, instead of having his brother come get us? Y'know, if that's cool with you. I just thought, if you're headed home, and since his house is sort of on the way, you might maybe. Hook us uppp. Kachow kachow."

She lightly shoots finger guns at him, the fast talking dropping off. Momentarily at a loss for words, Dipper shifts his gaze over to Aiden, who automatically waves genially from his spot behind Mabel, looking vaguely confused—probably because Mabel is being so hesitant about asking her brother for a ride in a vehicle that's supposed to be half hers. Dipper blinks. Right. Words. Should probably say some of those about now.

"No, yeah, sure. Hop in." Dipper feels his lips pull back into a grin. It's probably a really awkward sort of grin. Oh well, it's the best he can do. He's less than excited about this, but turning them down would have been out of the question.

Mabel smiles back, looking relieved. "Oy, thanks Dipper, you're a lifesaver. The awesome candy kind."

There're more fingerguns; Dipper just nods, still grinning away with that awkward grin. Mabel walks with a hurried, peppy bounce in her step around to get in the passenger seat, Aiden opens the sliding door to climb in the back, and then they're off.

Dipper flicks on his blinker, turning right out of the school parking lot as Aiden makes a remark to Mabel about something some guy said sometime somewhere. Mabel lets out a giggle in response, turning around in her seat, leaving Dipper tense and uncomfortable in the driver's seat as he finds himself third wheelin' it once again. Juuust like old times. Except not really, because now the whole third wheel thing comes with like, ten extra layers of complication that makes this old classic 'left out' feeling that much worse, and that much more awkward. At least, it is in his head. While the two other people in the car make casual conversation, Dipper fiddles with the radio and the volume dial, needing to feel like he's doing something. Great, and now he's sweating. He makes a subtle attempt to wipe one of his damp palms off on his shorts, although it's not like either of them are really paying attention to what he's doing anyway. This is. Just so great...

And totally not weird. Totally not weird at all.

... *Eugh.*

Yes, it's been three weeks. Sure, maybe Dipper has become a little more practiced in the art of acceptance... and being humble... and not being a total dick to Mabel's boyfriend just for being Mabel's boyfriend... and setting aside certain things for the sake of someone else. Or at least, he's really been trying. And generally it's been much less awkward-and-terrible between him and Mabel, which is a very good thing.

But dammit, this is still weird. Such prolonged close proximity between him, Mabel and Aiden hasn't happened since he'd sat across from the lovey-dovey couple at the kitchen table, halfheartedly chewing on sesame chicken. And in between then and now, some preeetty, uh, unconventional stuff has happened between him and his sister. Three weeks ago, but there's no denying that it happened. The fact that Aiden is none the wiser and sitting happily in the back seat of his and Mabel's (mostly just his, these days) van is just... weird. And the fact that Mabel is still dating the guy like nothing ever even happened, like she never went behind his back that one time and slept with her brother—that is also weird (shut *up* Dipper, you self entitled asshole).

Even though he badly wants to, Dipper doesn't really look at Mabel during the length of the drive. Instead he keeps his eyes glued to the road, like cops will swoop in and arrest him if he ever so much as takes his eyes off of it for more than two seconds. With this two-second rule going, he can't really be sure, but he gets the feeling that Mabel hasn't looked his way much, either. From the backseat, Aiden continuously initiates friendly bits of small talk about this and that, all the while letting Dipper know where he should turn. Up in the front seat there's a bit of an invisible elephant sitting between the two siblings, so if not for Aiden's presence, the drive probably would've been silent in terms of talking. Although Aiden is one of the reasons for the silence elephant in the first place, so maybe

not? Maybe it's been long enough that if it was him just and his sister, they might be back to snickering and bantering about whatever, like they always used to before he unleashed a torrent of his repressed-for-a-reason feelings and messed it all up?

Or maybe that's just wishful thinking on Dipper's part... he dares a glance over at her, and she's looking anywhere but at him. His chest tightens. Yeah. Probably wishful thinking.

They finally turn down a street and approach a two-story white house with blue shutters, which Aiden points out as his. Dipper slows to a stop in front of it and puts the van in park, addressing his two passengers. "Well, this is your stop."

"Awesome. Thanks for the ride, Dipper," Aiden claps the shorter, smaller boy on the shoulder before scooting to pull open the sliding door.

"Sure. Anytime," Dipper responds out of reflex. Oh. Why. Why did he say that, that is the exact opposite of what he wants. Whatever. With any luck Aiden probably didn't even hear him anyway, already out the door and shutting it behind him.

Dipper turns to watch Mabel pick up her bezazzled pink backpack and start to push out of her own door, but halfway out she pauses, twists back around to look at him. Her eyes are soft, and Dipper feels his heart skip a beat. Her glossy lips curl into a smile, and the skipping quickly escalates into melting.

"Hey, thanks for the ride, bro," she murmurs.

He smiles weakly back, hunched over with his hands still on the wheel. A bittersweet feeling wells up in his chest, because he can't really pinpoint the last time she called him by that particular nickname. "No problem," Dipper says in a voice that he desperately hopes is normal and even, "I'll uh, I'll see ya at home later."

"Sounds good."

Mabel cracks another small smile, and then the passenger side door is slamming shut behind her. He watches her skip around the front of the van, giving him a little wave as she walks over to meet up with her boyfriend on the sidewalk that leads up to his house. Dipper awkwardly lifts a hand in his version of a wave back, but she already has her back to him. He sticks around to watch their retreating backs for all of five seconds, long enough to see Aiden casually lace his and Mabel's fingers together, before Dipper quickly trains his vision forward again, throws the van in drive, and accelerates away.

He doesn't even make it out of Aiden's neighborhood before he abruptly pulls off to the side of the road and his foot stomps on the brakes. Dipper blinks a few times in distressed confusion, not really knowing why he stopped. A deep frown mars his face, his hands tightly gripping the peeling faux-leather of the steering wheel, his arms stiff and straight as a board. Next thing he knows an angry, frustrated noise erupts from the very bottom of his chest, smashing through the silence inside the old minivan that smells like fast food and

the strawberry-kiwi body spray Mabel must have been wearing. The sudden, harsh sound surprises even him. It sounded like something on the spectrum between a growl and a yell. With a dash of cry in there somewhere.

It feels good to shout and be loud and not hold things in for once, so Dipper makes the sound again and then one more time after that, each louder and angrier and more miserable than the last. He sinks down to rest his forehead on the steering wheel, the bill of his hat rising up on his head. He doesn't bother to fix it, his shoulders slumping, his eyes closing. He's always tired, but right now he feels exhausted, so Dipper stays there for a few solid minutes. Eventually he wordlessly sits back up and switches his foot back over to the gas pedal.

The yelling helped, but it didn't fix anything. There's still something building ominously inside him, growing more and more massive the whole drive home. Dipper makes it to his empty house in one piece, stalking straight upstairs into his room, shoving the door shut behind him with one foot. His bag drops curtly to the carpet, and he kicks off his shoes and rips off his hat on the way over to his unmade bed. Once there he throws himself down face-first into his pillow, and just lays there, steaming mad.

Fuck. *Fuck!* Why, why him! He never *asked* to feel *any* of this bullshit!

He's angry, and knows he has no justifiable reason for being so angry, which only serves to make him angrier. It's a vicious cycle. He growls, his voice muffled by the pillow.

Dipper has spent the last three weeks focusing the vast majority of his energy on ridding himself of feelings that are impossible to get rid of. Seriously. This is impossible! Like, if it *was* possible, wouldn't he have been over Mabel months ago? As in the *second* he realized what his feelings meant, and certainly long before shit could build up enough to hit the fan? If anything, this whole "purge" attempt has backfired, only made things worse. Not being around her doesn't magically make him not *love* her anymore, it just makes him depressed. And nostalgic. And it makes him miss her. Like all the time. She's pretty much all he thinks about. It's pathetic!

Dipper pushes himself up suddenly, flipping over to sit up with his back to his pillows and headboard. He glares across the room at his slightly ajar closet door, which, like most of the wall space in his room, is covered in posters, newspaper or magazine articles he cut out himself, little mementos or notes or drawings, most done by himself or Mabel. And then photographs. A giant chunk of which have Mabel's goofy, smiling face somewhere in them. Ugh. He really can't escape her. She's everywhere he looks.

This... this fucking sucks. Wanting what you know you can never have, and then trying to convince yourself you don't really want it, just fucking *sucks*. There's no other way to put it. Knowing what a horrible person you are for still secretly wanting it also fucking sucks. So does living with the knowledge that in some way you permanently altered, possibly forever ruined, your relationship with the one person you care about most. All because you did something stupid. And selfish. And disgusting, and terrible, and the list goes on.

This is so frustrating. He's a fact guy, it shouldn't be this hard to get the facts through his head. Mabel *does not* feel that way about him. She made it pretty damn clear that what happened between them was a one-time thing. A mistake, an error in the matrix, a gross lapse in judgement on her part (and most certainly on his too, but for different reasons) caused by who-knows-what. Mabel is in love with somebody else. Someone who is not related to her, because she is normal and not a degenerate basket-case like her sibling. Someone who makes her really happy. And above everything else, Dipper wants his sister to be happy... even if that means he's going to be miserable. So if he really, truly loves her as much as he claims to, then he should be able to stop thinking about her like this, right? For her sake, he should be able to forget about how perfectly she fit in his arms. He should be able to stop thinking about how soft her lips felt on his lips. And on his neck. And the way she'd... darted out her tongue and... ran it over his pulse, and... god, if he could just kiss her one more time—

There's a small shifting sensation between his legs, heat pooling down below. Dipper bites his lip. Crap. His mind kinda went off track there. Again. Dipper squirms in his seat, feeling uncomfortably hot and antsy. Of their own accord, his eyes move towards the place where his bed meets his nightstand table.

Goddammit.

Whyyyy didn't he just put them in the laundry when he was supposed to? They are *really not helping*. This isn't the first time this temptation has hit, and until he gets rid of those damn things, it won't be the last. So far he's resisted the urge to look down there, but he doesn't need to look to know they're still there. It's like they're mocking him. They've been mocking him for days, ever since his moment of weakness when he decided to stuff them down there like a perverted idiot. It was so *stupid* of him to do that. Dumbass. All he's doing is torturing himself.

Man. The past few days he'd always managed to break his eyes and his thoughts away by now, but Dipper's eyes are lingering, his mouth hanging open a little. Today just sucked so much, and he feels particularly low on willpower, and doing the right thing all the time feels like it's draining the life out of him, and he's so damn tired, and frustrated, and hopeless, and... and *lonely*...

... He shouldn't.

No one's going to know. And anyway, what were you planning on doing with them when you decided to take them? Come on, man. Get real.

Nope. Wrong. It'd be wrong. He made a promise to Mabel. And he's been working so hard to keep to his word. No more weird stuff. *No more.*

Tiny beads of sweat dot along Dipper's forehead, his teeth biting harder into his lower lip. Without meaning to he thinks about earlier, pictures fingers that aren't his intertwining so easily, so naturally, with Mabel's. His own hands scrunch up into fists where they lay limp against the comforter.

Ah, *screw it*.

His arm darts down into the crevice between his bed and his nightstand, groping around until he finds what he's looking for. He grabs them up, bringing the cotton underwear covered in sparkly little hearts into view, staring down at them with glazed over eyes just like he had a few days ago.

But this time Dipper doesn't stop himself from gliding his thumb back and forth over the crotch of them. His breath hitches, his cheeks heating up. Shit. Uhhm, yup, the last time Mabel wore these, she'd definitely been uh, excited. Out of habit his eyes dart towards his bedroom door, and then back to the item of interest. Oh god. He's gonna sniff them, isn't he? Yup, definitely is. Dammit. Not only is he gross, he's cliché gross. Dipper already feels like a huge perv before he even brings the frilly pink undergarment up to his nose, so afterwards he feels like *quite* the despicable creep. It's also sad how much the faint scent of her does for him, his cock already pressing hard against the confines of his shorts. An intoxicated feeling begins to seep over his body.

No. No no no. Ugh, man, please don't do this. Do *not*. Don't do this don't do this—

He crashes back into bed, closing his eyes and frantically rubbing a hand over his crotch, his other hand clutching the panties to his chest. His palm quickly gets hot from the friction. The rest of his body is starting to burn up too, as is his face, but for very different reasons.

Mabel...

Dipper unwittingly, yet inevitably, transports himself back to a night he's not supposed to think about anymore. The same night he's been helplessly stuck thinking about every single freaking day and night since. And as always, there she is, as if pasted on the backs of his eyelids, as if the memory of her has just been waiting on the edge of her seat for Dipper to break down and think of her again—her body soft and warm underneath his, the space between her legs even warmer and so gloriously wet. Her breath tickling his ear as she hurriedly whispers that it's okay, he can keep going.

Back in the present, the panties get brought up to his nose again and Dipper's fingers constrict around the stiff bulge in his shorts.

Stop. Please. *Stop*.

He drops them off to his side. But only for a second, just long enough for him to hastily unbutton and unzip his shorts, hook his thumbs inside his briefs and wrench both shorts and underwear down to his knees. Then he picks them up again, and the soft fabric that still smells like her gets wrapped around his throbbing erection, one hand holding it in place. Dipper starts moving his hand gently, his eyes squeezed shut. Ohh... oh no. Now that he's started he's not going to be able to stop. Shit. This isn't good (*so, soo good...*). He's sick. He's weak. He's...

Oh god, Mabel—

Yes, okay! He's a weak person with no self control, but he doesn't really give a shit about that at the moment because right now he's imagining himself inside her. He's imagining every last inch of himself inside of her, and it's... Jesus, it's unreal. The real thing is still so fresh in his mind, despite how hard he's been trying to block it out. But seriously, being with her was the most freeing, amazing feeling he's ever felt in his life, *ever*, fuck, how in the hell is he just supposed to *forget*? How is he supposed to trash the memory of the most incredible thing that's ever happened to him? How is he supposed to just forget about how stupidly in love with her *he still is*?

He can't. He *can't*. Dipper's working hand gathers speed, his wrist adding in little twisting motions with the panties on every upwards stroke, ones that make his inner thighs twitch and his fantasies that much more vivid. Through his ragged breaths he lets loose a few coarse, desperate little noises. Because he is. He is very, very desperate.

"Mabel," Dipper croaks loudly, sensually, because not only does he know for a fact no one's home and he won't get caught, but there's also that irrational, entirely selfish part of him that still wants so badly for his sister to hear him.

In his fantasy, she does hear him. She *more* than hears him, hell, fantasy Mabel is currently deviating from what actually happened, kissing him deeply as she takes charge, switching their positions, crawling on top of him. Real life Dipper slips his hand underneath his t-shirt to run his palm over his bare chest, groaning as fantasy Mabel lines him up and sinks down on him, engulfing him completely in slick, overwhelming warmth. When fantasy Mabel starts to repeatedly lift herself up and smack back down against his lap, her hands gripping his shoulders, real life Dipper grunts and grits his teeth, thrusting against his hand. His crappy old bed frame creaks irately every time his lower back arches off the mattress, but he doesn't even register the sound, too far gone in his own head. "A-ah, *Mabes*," he moans again, his voice catching.

He's dully aware that the panties against his skin are causing too much friction. It's beginning to hurt a little. But not enough to stop, or even slow down.

If anything his hand becomes that much more ruthless. God. *God*. Fantasy Mabel is really doing a number on him. And the worst part about fantasy Mabel? Technically she's not all in his head. At one point, a version of Mabel who really seemed to want him as much as he wanted her actually existed in reality. There was a time where she was really *real*, in his bed, dripping wet for him, her arms holding him close. And she hadn't just lied there as he moved in and out of her. Her hips had rolled up to his just as desperately. She'd kissed him back and then some, moaned into his ear, even softly called out his name.

And in the middle of it, when he'd stared into her eyes and she'd stared back, Dipper had been so enraptured, so *convinced* that Mabel had to feel the same way about him that it was in that moment he knew, he *knew* he was going to end up spilling his guts to her. Fuck it, he was going to tell her all of it. That he loved her, that he loved her so much it nearly drove him crazy holding it all in, how he had wanted to tell her for so long, how he'd give anything to be her number one person again, and how badly he wanted a shot at the whole being-her-boyfriend thing, too, as weird and unprecedented as that might be... god

he wanted it more than anything, if she'd have him. He decided he was going to spell out what had been viciously eating away at him for so long, just suck it up and *tell* her already, because—because—just the *way* she'd held his gaze as they rocked together, how could there ever be a chance that Mabel didn't love him back?

In the moment he'd been so *sure*. The side of Dipper's brain that he's been trying to ignore still argues that yeah, he knows he's probably guilty of romanticizing parts of his memory, but come on, he couldn't have imagined *all* of that, could he?

He switches hands, his cramping right hand taking a break to grab onto his leg, but the underwear stays. He needs it there. It's a sketchy connection to her, but a connection nonetheless. When it's there it somehow makes it easier for Dipper to vividly recall each of the little details from that night when Mabel was his and he was hers. The feel of her breasts pressing against his chest. Her fingertips digging into his back, her thighs trembling against his hips. The squeaks and whimpers he'd drawn out of her with his fingers, the way her mouth fell open when she came. . . the way she'd looked with her back bowed off his bed, her cute features crumpled into a picture of ecstasy, so fucking gorgeous that he'd literally stopped breathing for a moment. And *he* was the one who caused her to do all of that, feel all of that. *Him*. No one else.

He switches back to his dominant hand. Both the creaks of the mattress and Dipper's breathing speed up, growing harsher and louder. A bead of sweat dribbles down the side of his twisted up face. His bitten-off nails dig into his thigh, his wrist jerking aggressively. He's doing his best to stick to the fantasies and the mouthwatering memories in his head, but bits of reality keep slipping in and messing him up, pissing him off.

Ugh! Just—screw you reality! Get out of here! Dammit, can't he have this one moment for himself? The last three weeks of his life have been hell! As understanding as Mabel had been of his apology (probably too understanding, in his honest, deep down opinion), his relationship with her is still in shambles. She clearly, *understandably*, feels too awkward (disgusted?) to spend more than ten minutes at a time around him, and spends more time with her boyfriend than ever. And it's all his fault. He's the disgusting one. He's the one who was dumb and inconsiderate enough to let himself entertain that stupid pipe dream, that long shot hope that if he just. . . somehow clued Mabel in to how he felt about her, then maybe, maybe there could at least be a *chance* that she might. . . that they could. . .

Ugh, it doesn't matter anymore, he was an idiot, he was a so very wrong idiot and everything blew up in his face, and now, he's *lost* her. As incredible as it was to get to be with Mabel just once, it was not worth this. She's *never* going to look at him the same way again, he just knows it, and shit man, he doesn't blame her. He's lost her trust, her friendship, all the little displays of sisterly affection and support he used to get on the daily, *everything*, and every minute Dipper doesn't see her, every time he sees her attached at the hip with the abhorrently perfect guy she more or less chose over him. . . Jesus Christ, it hurts. The kind of hurt that's like slowly withering away and wanting to burst in a violent explosion at the same time. That hopeless, helpless, sickeningly *longing* feeling is always, always there. Pressing in hard on his chest. Crushing him.

Fuck. He needs to finish. But every time he gets close it slips just out of his reach. Dipper's head thrashes on his pillow, his lungs dragging in heavy, sporadic breaths. He hasn't touched himself in over a week, because when he does, he can only ever think of that night. He feels like he's going to die if he doesn't get this release. He needs this... oh, fuck it, he needs *her*, god, he needs her so fucking badly—h-how can she not *see that*—

His orgasm finally slams into him, so hard that Dipper cries out softly. His heart beats thunderously loud in his ears as he shudders, his hand dazedly shifting the panties over the tip of his twitching dick a few seconds too late. In his mind's eye, he's not getting off into a pair of panties—oh hell no. In his head he's buried in her to the hilt and she *wants* him there, her lips hot and urgent against his, legs wrapped around his waist, hands in his hair as he drowns in her. Perfect. *Amazing*. He lets himself get lost in the feeling.

He wishes he could stay lost forever. But as soon as that last aftershock subsides, and Dipper is forced to start making an effort to catch his breath, back in his bed, alone, reality is there waiting for him.

And man, is it *harsh*. His burning skin quickly starts to feel cold. Mabel's underwear drops from his limp grip as he brings up his hands to cover his red, sweaty face.

Oh no, *no*, what did he just... he's supposed to be moving on. He swore to her, to her face, that he would move on, that she didn't have to worry, this was going to stop. What the fuck is he doing? He *promised* her!

Apparently a promise means absolutely nothing to him, which isn't very surprising. By now Dipper is quite aware of the fact that he isn't exactly one of the greatest, most morally sound people to roam the Earth. Faaaaar from it. Integrity? Common decency? Nah. Clearly not very high on *his* priorities list. Clearly.

Dipper croaks out a hoarse, cynical laugh, because the state he's found his life in these days is just. Ahh, hilarious. Seriously, this, this is rich. Home alone on a Friday night, jerking off into a pair of his twin sister's underwear, being an angsty little shit because '*wahh, my life sucks, I'm in love with my sister but she's a normal, non disgusting person who wants normal non disgusting things and didn't wanna leave her boyfriend to do the incest thing with me, wahh*'—meanwhile Mabel is off gallivanting with said boyfriend, and they're probably laughing and joking around and happy, a-and kissing, and—and doing god knows what with each other—

A sharp stabbing feeling pierces Dipper's chest, that invisible knife deep and twisting. He's pathetic. He has the urge to throw up, he is so fucking pathetic. A burning sensation rises up in his eyes, accompanied by a lump in his throat.

Wow. You're going to cry, aren't you? Haha! Of course! Of course you are!

... Don't you dare.

Dipper takes his hands off his face and blinks hard, glaring at the ceiling, stubbornly swallowing down the tight feeling at the back of his throat. There will be no goddamn crying here tonight. He swore to himself he would stop crying over her, seeing as the excessive self pity thing felt really inappropriate considering what he... considering the circumstances.

Seriously, he has *really* got to stop looking back at their one-off fluke of a night together with this ‘fond wistfulness’ his lovesick brain keeps insisting upon. There is nothing *fond* or *wistful* about dumping an industrial-sized bucket of feelings on your unsuspecting and emotionally vulnerable sister, confusing the unholy hell out of her, and then initiating sex in the midst of that stunned confusion, before anyone can bat an eyelash. Nnnope. Not cool, Dipper.

His stomach careens in a sickening lurch, as it always does when he mentally owns up to the cold hard truth of what he might’ve done that night. The whole thing had happened so fast, it’s so hard to... like, she had touched his cheek and looked deep into his eyes and said all those things, and he swears to god, at the time he really did believe they were pretty much on the same page, or at least he truly let himself believe it, so... he didn’t bother to ask before he kissed her. He didn’t bother to ask before he put his hands all over her. Crawled on top of her. Took off his clothes.

And even if he did ask if she was sure before they sealed the deal, even if she did whisper that it was okay, even if she *did* seem really into it, well... Dipper can’t deny the fact that he knows his sister tends to be a people-pleaser who has a hard time saying no, and in hindsight how much of a ‘yes’ is a rushed *it’s-okay-you-can-keep-going* anyway, a-and... afterwards Mabel had *cried*, she had been *crying* and *not* in the ‘oh Dipper that was amazing’ way, and she wouldn’t really look at him, and tried to sneak out of his room and then acted like it never happened and holy fucking shit, *how* is he supposed to interpret all of that, what did all of that mean?!

Jesus, w-what if, what if it meant—how is he supposed to live with himself knowing that he might’ve—god he still can’t even say it—

Scumbag you’re a scumbag you’re a disgusting scumbag slimeball—

Dipper presses his fingers into his watering eyes as he tries to calm his breathing, swallowing down another lump in his throat. It’s getting harder and harder to trust his own memories and thought processes, the more he dwells on it. The screaming doubts and nauseating what-ifs and unanswered questions he’s too mortified to ask her scare the *shit* out of him, make him physically sick, make him seriously wonder how Mabel even manages to look at him anymore, let alone talk to him.

His stomach twists even further when he glances down and registers the sight of her cutesy pink heart undies where they now sit, used and sticky, on his hip. Oh, god. What is *wrong* with him? He’s so sick in the head.

Dipper props himself up groggily, looking down between his legs and wincing. In his desperation to get off he didn’t exactly go easy on himself, his skin pink and tender. The underlying self loathing throughout the whole thing probably didn’t help.

He sits all the way up, sluggishly using the cleanish sections of the panties to wipe up what he missed. Some of it got on his shirt. Lovely. He eases up his underwear, carefully stretching the waistband far out over himself so as not to further upset his sore crotch. Ow. Ow. Thaaat is not a great feeling. Way to go, Dipper.

His shorts get pulled back up next, fly re-zipped. His movements are slow and heavy. His limbs feel like lead. He scoots to drop his legs off the edge of his bed, hunching to rest his forehead in his hands.

This is not okay. So far from okay. Yeah, he might be in love with her, but Mabel is still his sister. And even if he's been a selfish, fucked up idiot lately, underneath it all Dipper still loves her the same way he always has. In that *you're my twin and I love you and I will always protect you and have your back* sort of way. Man. He never thought his protective brother instincts would kick in so hard against himself. If Mabel knew the things he thought or what he just did or how terrible and disgusting he really is. . .

Jeez, how *crushed* would she be? He's supposed to have her back. Like he always has. Mystery twins for life. Fistbump. That's their whole deal. Or it was, at least. . . she's supposed to be able to trust him.

He's got to do better. He's got to try harder. Because obviously, he's not trying hard enough. What's going on right now is *not* working. He's just as shitty of a brother to her as he ever was, and Mabel. . . Mabel deserves so much better than this.

Something has to change. He has to force himself to change, even if it kills him. He's got to go back to being a good brother. *Just* brother. He's got to accept that. Really accept it this time. Somehow. If he *really* loved her, (and he *does*, *oh god he does*) that's what he would do.

Dipper's hands drag down his face, and then through his wild hair.

Fuck. He needs to go take a walk or something.

Dipper heaves himself to his feet, tugging off his shirt and pulling on a supposedly clean one he finds on the floor. His hat gets hooked back on his head, his shoes tied back on his feet. He heads for the door, but stops suddenly, turning back to his bed.

A pair of girly, pink heart panties still sit on the blue bedspread, crumpled up and out in the open. Yeahh. . . probably not a good idea to just leave them there. Would not bode well if anyone other than him were to walk in his room. Dipper contemplates washing them out now, putting them through the laundry before anyone gets home, but decides against it. What is he going to do, give them *back* to her? After what he just did? It doesn't matter if he washes them or not. They're ruined. He can never give them back.

He hesitates, his dry lips pursing.

Well. . . if I can't return them, then maybe. . . it wouldn't matter if. . .

“Oh my god, *really?*” Dipper yells to his silent, empty bedroom, snorting in exasperation. Jesus Christ, has he really learned nothing?! Wow. Wow! He is going to throw them *out*. *Not* keep them. Fucking hell, Pines.

Stomping forward, he plucks up the soiled panties between his thumb and forefinger, a grimace on his face. Oh. Disgusting. You know? He really needs to get out of here. Right now. He can throw these out later. They’ll get their own trash bag and everything, and he will personally escort them outside to the dumpster. He swears. But right now he doesn’t want to look at them anymore.

Dipper crams the dirty underwear back in the crevice between his bed and his nightstand, then stalks from the room, head down, the door slamming behind him.

by Double Pines

Period Piece

Mabel Pines could never stand the nickname ‘Aunt Flow’ for periods. Hearing it made her straight up cringe. Like, if her period *has* to be described as some metaphorical ‘Auntie’ figure—and really, she’d rather it not be—then it sure ain’t no aunt of hers. If it is she’d be a super estranged aunt. The kind of aunt who’s annoying and unnecessary and who you’d *really* rather not invite to the family reunions, uh uh, no ma’am.

Her period started yesterday afternoon, and the first few days always leave Mabel feeling extra greasy and icky. So consequently, bloated, crappy, tired, and gross-feeling are the words she would choose to describe the overall mood of this less-than-amazing Thursday. This morning she woke up with a pimple on her cheek mercilessly on its way to Mt. Vesuvius status. Coupled up with that were cramps out the wazoo, like a herd of tiny bite-sized goats repeatedly head-butting her insides. What’s worse is she slept through her alarm, and therefore didn’t have enough time to shower before school, which only magnified the gross feeling twelveteen-fold.

Ugh. Curse you day two. Curse you!

Although, she can’t say The Thursday Of Ickiness has been *all* bad. There’ve been a few high points. Most of them thanks to her main saving grace today, aka her brother... well him, and also getting lots of ego-boosting comments on her Elizabethan cat sculpture during group critique in art class, that was pretty awesome.

Okay, but the bro-bro, though. First, he did her a solid and packed her lunch for her that morning while her discombobulated, goat-cramp-assualted self was hobble-rushing around upstairs getting ready. She didn’t ask him to, he just did it, and Dipper barely remembers to pack his own lunch most of the time, so it was a kindhearted gesture by itself, for reals.

But when Mabel broke out her pig-shaped lunchbox in the cafeteria later that day, inside she discovered that the considerate-sib-gesture came with bonuses: an extra pack of Tigerfist fruit snacks *and* a scribbly note thing written in code, which he’d folded at *least* ten times. Her heart quickly made a mad dash to melty-town, and she’d had to fib to her friends about why she was suddenly smiling so hard.

She spent half of fifth period Spanish with her tongue poked out in concentration (it was a pretty short note but she's slow at this stuff) using the hastily scrawled out cipher he included to decode the sweet little message. So friggin' sweet that she got called out by Ms. Melendez in front of the whole class for making high-pitched squeaky sounds in her throat without realizing it. Oops. Worth it, though. Dipper doesn't do the love note thing often, only once before, but when he does the notes he writes to her are so awkwardly heartfelt and cute, with lots of scratched out bits and eraser marks in between blurbs of his messy handwriting. Like he was really struggling to get the words *just* right before he scrambled them up into secret not-actually-nonsense. Gah, she can't even with him. It actually made her forget about the groggy grossness for awhile.

On top of the lunch-packing and cute-note-giving, when they got home from school that day, instead of holing himself in his room and hittin' the books—after some *artful* pestering—Dipper agreed to be her model for a giant figure drawing assignment of hers (due tomorrow, assigned last week, Procrastinabel-Mabel strikes again). Which is a pretty big deal for him, considering how much he's been freaking out lately about all the AP exams happening next week. That adorable psycho took *four* AP classes this year, and therefore has been diving headlong into study mode as soon he gets home from school for many moons, now. *Man* she can't wait 'til those dumb exams are over. Study mode has seriously been cutting into mackin' time.

But still, freak-out-mode '*ahhhh I have to know every single detail about everything or obviously I will fail and then also die*' Dipper doesn't put his textbooks and pages and pages of color-coded-via-highlighter notes aside for just anything, or anybody. Being prioritized over homework will sure make an icky-feeling gal feel special (ooh that sounds a little sad when she thinks it aloud. Whatever, she stands by the sentiment!).

And that figure drawing sesh ended up being like, the most fun she'd had all day so far. With the dumb jokes flowing and flirty banter that was more life-giving than anything that had come from hanging out with her friends at school. She'd arrange his limbs into poses that Dipper would never do in real life; Adonis-esque poses or Coyote Ugly poses or butt-accentuating poses that he actually went along with, all pretend-serious, until they were both broken down into giggle-messes and she had to re-pose him into something a little less hilarious and a little more stable. She kept sabotaging herself by making him laugh when she needed him to sit or stand very very still. But in the end her drawings came out pretty good anyway, and Dipper's face got all smiley and cute when she showed them to him.

He wasn't willing to risk giving her a *proper* thank-you kiss since Dad had just gotten home from work, although he might've snuck a quick one in there while Dad was in the bathroom, turning her face into a goopy smiley number that rivaled his. Once again, her significant brother had made her temporarily forget all about her Aunt Doom woes. Such a magical being, he is.

Most recently, when Mabel dragged her feet into Dipper's room at the tail end of The Thursday Of Ickiness, flopping down face-first into his bed, whining dramatically that her stomach hurt and she couldn't sleep and desperately needed to play some cheer-up

videogames, he graciously closed the AP Bio textbook he'd just had his nose buried in. Pulled himself away from his desk with an, "I call Player One," walked over to dig around in a jumbled milk crate full of old electronics, cords and controllers, successfully unearthing his dusty Gamecube.

Hot diggity dog, the Dips is a keeper, a dang keeper. As a broseph and as a bee-eff (well obviously, duh).

And um... she really did come in his room just wanting to play old Nintendo games, she swears. It *did* start out that way, with them crammed next to each other against a pillow-pile on Dipper's bed, giggling and smack-talking in low voices as they duked it out over some Smash Bros on the boxy, old-as-heck TV that's been in Dip's room since the dawn of time. Buuuut, like many of the one-on-one-hang-out activities she does with the broski these days, at some point old videogame playing mysteriously turned into making out. How did this happen? Truly, it's a mystery. So *mysteriousssss*.

Pff, what can she say, it's unanimously their fave one-on-one activity. The whole twin-on-twin-dating phenomenon is still pretty newish, and the novelty of being able to kiss him whenever she wants has yet to wear off. Well, 'whenever she wants' as in when they're completely alone and the door is locked and every box on Dipper's irritating clear-for-lip-landing mental checklist has been ticked off... admittedly there's some fine print, there. But still. It sure as heck hasn't worn off for her brother, either. The mutual rush they get from *together*-togetherness doesn't feel like something that can ever 'wear off,' to be honest.

Sooo uh, yup, that's where she's at right now. Deep in major mack mode. Score one for icky Mabel.

Sometimes making out with Dipper is something soft and sweet, more about chillin' out and simply enjoying being close to one another. Lips-on-lips close. Where they're not in any hurry, and they can just spend hours snuggling and hand-holding and kissin' up each other's faces in a warm, comforting embrace. Maybe it'll get a *little* heated here and there, but it doesn't lead up to anything besides a buttload of warm fuzzy feelings in her chest.

Other times, though, the kissing is much less patient, and isn't what Mabel would call soft, exactly—more like swelteringly hot, full-body-buzz inducing, ravenous liplocks where she feels like she could devour him whole if she's not careful, like *umph step aside Mom's meatloaf this gal's havin' Dips for dinner* kisses. Faster paced, if-I-don't-keep-kissing-you-I'll-die, hands all over the place shenanigans that make her heart race way too fast to be healthy. That kind of making out, if the timing is right, often leads to their clothes sprawled on the floor, and damp sheets. Uh, from sweat. Mostly from sweat.

Mabel can safely say that she likes both kinds of Dipper-make-out styles equally. She likes that they're capable of both, she likes that she gets to wake up in the mornings never really knowing if it's gonna end up being one or the other, should make outs happen that day.

She especially loves that there's never, ever any pressure to do anything except what feels right in the moment. Being with Dip is just like that, she's joyfully come to discover. It comes so naturally, so blissfully easy to her. Before him, she didn't think being *this* comfortable gettin' all physical-like with a guy was even possible... though she can still sense that Dipper might not be as one-hundred-percent comfy sometimes, when it comes to rated-M-for-mature make outs with her. Not because he doesn't want to or anything, he's certainly the same eager beaver that he's been since the beginning of this luuuuhve saga. It's more along the lines of him being overly careful with her, visibly overthinking his touches and moves, seeking out her permission so often that it's a little annoying, that sort of thing.

But she'd never tell Dipper she thinks it's annoying. His heart's in the right place, and she long ago gathered where all the cautiousness stems from. All those weeks of thinking monstrously icky thoughts in that overthinky icky-thought-prone brain of his, thoughts that involved him convincing himself he'd done Unforgivable Things back when they were in awkward post-first-hookup relationship limbo, sure messed her bro up good. Whiiich is something she still can't help but assume full responsibility for, since she failed to nip those evil-alien thoughts of his in their evil-alien-egg buds via flamethrower, Sigourney Weaver style, from the very beginning... even if she wasn't really aware of the full extent of them, even if he's assured her multiple times that *'none of that stuff's on you, Mabel,'* (they've had a handful of cuddly late night heart-to-hearts since they started the boyfriend-girlfriend thing).

Blah, but she can't change lame past-Mabel decisions, or let herself get swallowed up by the guilt monster. All she can do is continue to coax him in the right direction, keep building up his confidence and letting him know it's all good.

And it is all good. He's come a long way confidence-wise already. Even if that wasn't the case, she loves the stuffing out of this kid, she doesn't mind the extra emotional hand-holding. Plus, in the end she gets to make out with him either way, so, yayy for Mabel!

A Gamecube controller gets kicked off the end of the bed as Mabel squirms and squeaks out a breathy moan, raking her fingers through Dipper's hair while he fervently sucks at her pulse, halfway on top of her. She moves a hand down to teasingly drag her nails up the inside of his thigh, causing his boxers to ride up. He chokes in a ragged breath, whispering her nickname heavily against her neck before firmly reattaching his mouth to hers.

Ayup. Tonight feels like it's leading down the path of Dip-make-out style numero dos. The hot to trot kind. And even as Mabel tugs him closer, sighs sensually into his mouth, nips his bottom lip with conviction, a tiny little minuscule piece of her brain is *just* outside of being completely in the moment.

On any other day this level of friskiness would be fine, more than fine, and it's still mostly fine but... argh, today is day *two*, and hot-to-trot make outs with Dipper have never happened on day two before, or on any other heavy Aunt Doom day. It just... it throws the teensiest of wrenches into the mix. While she is all *about* Dip's fancy tongue

work and tushie squeezes, she absolutely does *not* want him discovering the war-torn granny panties and maxi pad she's currently rockin'. (Why did she not at least think to put on cuter underwear before she came in here, why universe, why?!)

So she's gotta play it cool, keep the focus on him. Which might be easier said than done, because Dipper, bless his heart, is definitely, erm, what one might call a giver when it comes to him and her and doing stuff. Ohh boy... no no, she's got this, she's got this. It'll be fine.

Soon she's got him out of his shirt, and they're wrapped up in each other's arms good 'n tight enough that she can feel how happy to be here his body is. So goshdern happy that it wants to spread the joy via leg-poking. Heat surges through her at the feel of him, her stomach diving into a somersault, her back bowing into an instinctive arch.

Dipper hisses out his first breathless curse of the night and arches his back, too. He drops any notion of being subtle about where his head is at, deliberately pressing himself into her thigh until she can feel so much of him that her head goes for a floaty little swim. Her flushed skin rapidly becomes blazing hot, the between-the-leg tingles escalating into warm, pleasurable throbs.

He starts to grind against her leg, his hips rolling just barely. Just barely is enough to make her let out a soft, high pitched sound, her nails scraping down the length of his back. The vibe quickly gets more desperate, sharp breaths escaping through the split-second gaps between their mouths as they frantically tilt their heads in search of angles that allow them better access. The music from the choose-your-character screen still displayed on the crappy off-color TV serves as their official eat-face soundtrack, the upbeat intensity of it *really* working for them somehow (poor Kirby and Fox, long ago selected but never to see battle. At least, not tonight).

Unfortunately, at some point Mabel kind of forgets about Operation Keep-Things-Focused-On-Not-Her. Which isn't her fault! Make-out style number two makes her brain turn to static. Also it's hard to discourage or redirect anything he's doing when she's umm, enjoying it so much. Like, a looooot. A lot a lot. She didn't actually realize it until he started getting handsy with her junk-in-the-trunk, but no thanks to stupid ol' AP exam prep eating away most of Dipper's time and brainpower, it seems she's become a *tiny* bit pent up as of late. And he's so hard and *warrrrrrrm*, sweet Sally he's practically searing her leg through his boxers as he moves against her and wait, whaat are thoughts again? Does she *really* need any of those right now? Nahh, right?

She feels Dipper lifting the hem of her own brightly colored sleep shirt (her old Boyz 4 Now concert tee, their last tour before they broke up, r.i.p.), and he gets it halfway up her torso before meeting her eyes and breaking out that classic doe-eyed, '*can I...?*' face. Mabel just sits up and lifts her arms in response, and he wordlessly finishes pulling it off of her.

Dipper's hand starts to trace the undersides of her breasts, his lips still busy workin' their magic on hers, which is, hngg, great, and then he gently squeezes her over her purple sports bra which is even *more* great. But eventually his fingers trickle away from her bra in a southwards direction, and Mabel's eyes fly open, her face jumping from kiss-dazed to mildly anxious.

Oh, poopnuggets, fingers have definitely started to move down her belly, mm-hm, downwards movement confirmed—uh oh. Is he going for what she thinks he's going for and what based on previous experience he's more than likely indeed going for?

His caressing hand finishes its meandering trail down her stomach, easily slipping past the waistband of her loose-fitting, hamburger-and-fries-themed PJ shorts to reach the elastic of her ramshackle-for-period-week-only panties, and Dipper breathes out a soft groan against her lips as he starts to wriggle his fingertips underneath it—

—*Yup he's def going for it aw dang it.*

"Hmmmmaybe not tonight actually," Mabel blurts, hurriedly grabbing his wrist before he can dip his hand inside. Dipper's whole arm goes rigid at the contact and his hand instantly jerks away.

"Ah, s-sorry—" His head rears back to look at her with a (sadly familiar) mortified, skittish look that makes her heart sink like a rock, his whole body gearing up to shoot away from her. "Crap, I'm really sorry, I should've asked—"

Aw, flapjacks.

"Noooo it's not—*nnnn* oh my god stop retreating you doof," Mabel grabs onto his shoulder and scooches closer, not letting him get away any further on the bed, then cups his jaw so he's forced to look directly at her with that endearing, panicking doof face of his. "*Hey*, it's alright. Deep breaths, Dippinsauce. You didn't do anything wrong, I'm just—I'm on my period."

She follows up with a resigned, *yea-it's-lame-what-are-ya-gonna-do* expression and shrug combo. Dipper blinks a few times in a row, his eyebrows un-furrowing as this new information sinks in, his mouth opening and his expression changing hilariously fast.

"... Oh."

"Yeahh... probably should've mentioned that before stuff got all hot-n-heavayyy, I guess. Buuut yeah. It's day two and day two is tampon-plus-a-pad day if ya know what I'm sayin. S'not pretty, uh-uhh, no it is not."

"Oh," Dipper says again, breathing out the word in a sort of dazed sigh of relief.

"Like you were headed straight for the danger zone, buddy. It's a bloodbath down there."

"Ah. Gotcha." He bobs his head slowly.

“I’m talkin’ total warzone. So many fallen tampax soldiers, like you wouldn’t *believe*.”

“I think I got it, Mabel,” Dipper breathes out a few chuckles, his coffee-colored eyes shifting down and back up to hers.

“Okay just wanted to be clear. I can’t have you thinking I’m not into fun times with the Dip fangers or anything. Gotta nip those evil thoughts right in the bud.” She gives him a solemn, wide eyed look that finally cracks him, silent giggles beginning to shake his shoulders. “*Rrrrright* in the bud,” she repeats with one of her infinite number of silly accents, her fingers darting out to attack the ticklish spot on Dipper’s belly. He jerks, folding forward and letting out a loud guffaw, immediately clapping a hand to his mouth afterwards.

“Oh my god Mabel don’t tickle me, we’re supposed to be being quiet, here,” Dipper hisses as he reflexively looks towards the bedroom door to reaffirm its locked status, but she can still hear remnants of laughter in his voice even though he’s trying to be all serious.

“Whoopsie, my bad, my bad.”

Dipper straightens back up so they’re face to face, a small all-is-forgiven grin on his lips. For a few moments they listen for any signs of wakefulness from their snoozing parental units down the hall, but there’s not a rustle to be heard, and paranoid-Dipper thankfully retreats back into his paranoia cave.

Mabel takes the opportunity to nuzzle her nose against her brother’s for a languid eskimo kiss. “So anyways, back on topic,” she kisses him, light and teasing, “I’m off the table for *stuuhrff*, but that doesn’t mean we can’t still get you all good ‘n taken care of. . .” She waggles her eyebrows, rubbing her hand along his thigh so that her fingers disappear just inside the shorts of his boxers every time she moves it up.

But Dipper doesn’t react at all the way she was expecting to her offer to do *stuuhrff* to him, definitely not the way he usually does. All of a sudden he’s having a hard time meeting her eyes, his brow looking the slightest bit frowny and uncertain. What the heck, does he not *want* an H-jay or possibly maybe a bee-jay or some other kind of jay? Uhm, that sure doesn’t sound like the Dip she’s come to know over the last few weeks. . . the half-tent he’s pitchin’ in his undies says otherwise, too.

“Oh-kay Dipper, time to spill, what’s wrong,” Mabel asks, her tone mostly jokingly exasperated but also a hint of worried, which gets him to look at her for real again. “Are you not in the mood? That’s fine, too. . .”

“No, no,” he says a little too fast to be considered cool. “It’s—really, definitely not that. I’m just. . .” He cocks his head at her and nibbles on his bottom lip a tiny bit, still glancing at her all weird and unsure-like.

“Mmm, whuzzup with that face, I don’t like that faceeee,” she sing-songs, frowning.

“I was just—gonna ask. . . uh, aree you? Totally off the table for stuff? Because if you’re not comfortable that’s totally fine but like, if you didn’t want me touching you for, you know, my sake, I mean. . . I wouldn’t actually uh, mind um. . .” Mabel’s eyebrows

shoot up, sky-high, like, *all* the way up. Dipper shrugs, the last remnants of his confidence breaking down to shyness at the surprised, entirely skeptical look she's fixing on him. "I-I'm just saying, I, I'd be okay with... stuff. Even though it's day two." He gives her an awkward smile.

Mabel's face turns cherry red. She shakes her head at him, wincing and squinting dubiously. "Uhhhhm, I really don't think you know what you're signing up for there, Dip."

"I mean... seems pretty self explanatory..." he scratches the peach fuzz on his chin, blurting out the rest of his sentence quickly, "but like I said if you're not comfortable with it then the point is moot ya know? It's fine." Another shrug.

Mabel gives him a long look, narrowing her eyes at him, her eyebrows still raised.

"...What?" Dipper says when he can't take her staring anymore, his cheeks completely flushed.

"I'm thinking."

"Okay..." His eyes shift around the room restlessly as he lays there on his side and waits for her to say something more. When she doesn't for a while he speaks up again. "... Any chance of youu maybe sharing? What you're thinking?"

She heaves a dramatic sigh at the ceiling, flopping an arm over her face. "Ughh I'm trying to figure out which Mabel is gonna win this one."

"Uhh, not sure I follow..."

"As in there are two Mabels. Two rough-and-tumblin' Mabels. In muh brain. And they're in the midst of this cage match, right," she mimes a few boxing movements with her fists, "and *one* of them is the Mabel who is super in the mood to get her rocks off right now, we'll call her for lack of a better, less icky word," she throws up some gratuitous air quotes, "'Horny Mabel,' and she's facing off with the Mabel who is mortified at the thought of you having gross period hands because of me, and her pro-wrestling name can be... uhhmm how bout 'No Freakin Way Mabel.' Er no. 'The NoFreakinWayinator.'"

"... Oh," Dipper clears his throat awkwardly. "... So, uh, who's winning?"

"Don't know. Pretty evenly matched, those two. They're still going at it."

He goes quiet for a while, looking so annoyingly (beautifully) sympathetic, clearly fumbling for what to say to her. "... I don't think you're gross," is what he ends up going with.

Ah, Dipper. Sweet, naive babymanchild.

"Aw, I know, bro. I'm not saying I think *I'm* gross it's just that... bluhhh, periods are pretty gross man. And this whole offer-deal is coming from someone who has, and I'm just assuming here, never experienced gross bloody period hands firsthand."

“Er, ahm—Iguessthat, you, well. Hm.” Uh oh, looks like she broke him. She’s whined about her periods many-a-time to Dipper before but she supposes she’s never gotten this gory about it. Haha, oh, teenaged boys and their weak constitutions. . .

He finally gets his mouth to form organized(ish) words again. “It’s not like I’d be—like I wouldn’t actually be doing the full, er—I mean I could just stick to—” He lifts up his hand and moves his index and middle fingers around in tiny circles, grinning innocently.

Mabel snorts and makes an anguished face, her tongue sticking out as she smacks his hand out of the air. “Oh my gosh, stoppit stoppit right now I will punch you.”

Dipper laughs, raising his hands in surrender. “What? That’s what it is!”

“Yes Dip, I am aware. Now please, no more fingering the invisible wizard.”

His lips purse hard, clearly struggling to hold back a giant laugh although some of it still escapes through his nose. “I thought the invisible wizard was a dude.”

“Uh uh, he’s nonbinary. Also he can spontaneously change sexes, depending on the needs of the wizard population. Like West African frogs.”

Dipper rolls his eyes good naturedly, brushing a curl out of her face and twirling it around his finger. “Okay Dr. Grant. Now I’m thinking you’re just trying to change the subject.”

Mabel drags her hands down her cheeks, pulling down her lower eyelids to make a scary monster face at him. “Bgghhfffuhhh. Whyyyy are you being so insistent about this you weirdo.”

There he goes again with that dumb, annoying, entirely sweet and gentle smile. Errgh. “Because I don’t think it’s weird,” he chuckles softly, “and since we’ve been talking about it this long I’m pretty sure you actually want me to do it, and I want to do it, and, yeah.”

She whines, rolling her face into her pillow with a torn, muffled, “I don’t knowwww. You might not feel weird about it but I kinda feel weird about it.”

Dipper purses his lips to one side, his eyes gazing down towards the pillow under his shaggy head of hair (he’s gonna have to get his butt to a Great Clips soon). “Well. . . if you feel that weird about it, then we don’t have to. That’s fine, too.”

Mabel just whines again through her pillow barrier, in an obvious *that’s-not-the-answer-I’m-looking-for* way.

Dipper swallows, gearing up to propose an alternative strategy. “Or—I could just. . .” he tentatively moves his hand to trace the pads of his fingers up the side of her thigh, “you know, rub you, like. Over the underwear? Would that work?”

She peeks at him, back to looking skeptical. “. . . You’d actually wanna do that?”

“Yeah, of course,” Dipper says, sounding a little confused, like his answer ought to be completely obvious.

“... Even though I’m wearin’ a granny pad? With *wings*?”

The pitiful look on her face and slightly-dejected note in her voice spurs Dipper to reach up and tenderly touch her cheek, leaning in a little closer to kiss the tip of her nose before he spouts off in a super-soothing voice, “Especially ‘cos you’re wearin a granny pad.” Mabel makes a weirded-out face and he instantly winces with embarrassment, shaking his head. “Ack, I know, yeah, that came out wrong. That’s not what I—ugh, okay, really failing at the trying-to-be-comforting thing, here...” He clenches his eyes shut for a second and takes a breath, trying again. “I just meant that I don’t care about the pad. Or that you’re on your period. Still wanna touch you.”

Dipper shoots her a crooked, genuine smile, and Mabel feels herself turning red again, still halfway buried in the pillow and peeking out at him.

“Ghhhh... blahhhh...” She lets her tongue loll out of her mouth, caught up in the last of the Mabel-v-Mabel brain battle. Then she sighs, finally rolling out of her hiding place to skitter over and snuggle up to her brother, burrowing her head under his chin. He wraps his arms around her, and it’s quiet for a little bit.

“Mm, hey. Bro,” Mabel breaks the silence, using her index finger to draw swirly, invisible pictures on Dipper’s bare chest. “You’re really not failing as badly as you think you are at being comforting. Just to let you know. Also you’re cute and I heart your schmoopy butt.”

“Ah, well that’s a relief,” he chuckles, gently scratching his nails up and down her back. “Although schmoopy, is that, a *good* thing? A positive butt quality? Cause it sounds... hm.”

“In this context, oh yes, it’s a very good thing.”

“Alright. Guess I gotta take your word for it.”

Dipper kisses the top of her head. Mabel smoothes her fingers back and forth over the small amount of hair on his chest before moving up to lay her head on the pillow right next to his, and the twins regard each other warmly for a few comfortable (but sort of giddy) seconds. Dipper starts to lean in, but Mabel moves faster and beats him to it, closing the majority of the gap, cradling his face and kissing him soundly. The kiss makes the switch from sweet to heavy pretty fast, the sounds of wet smacks and a soft moan or two once again joining the quiet (but *epic*) Melee menu music.

Eventually they break apart, both gasping for breath and a lot redder in the face. Dipper opens his eyes slowly, his lips pink and swollen and parted, gazing at her with a half-lidded, heated look that makes her heart beat double time.

“Hey. Love you,” he decides to whisper, his hand stroking the mussed up tresses on the side of her head, as if her whole body didn’t already feel melty enough.

Hng. Ah. Hm. Ghhh... oh, all right. What the hey. He said he wanted to do it like a bunch of times, and he was right on the money about her, she *definitely* wants him to touch her right now. She can't witness the look that's currently on his face and *not* want it. That dork. The NoFreakinWayinator humbly accepts her defeat.

"Hmmm," she hums contentedly, murmuring back, "Love you too." She leans her forehead against her twin's birthmarked one, breathing out, letting her eyelids drift closed again.

"... Okay," she whispers.

"Okay?"

"*Okayyy*," she repeats, reaching up to take the hand in her hair and move it down between her legs, her eyes still closed.

She doesn't have to say anything more than that. Dipper tilts his head and kisses her again, slow and longing, his hand drifting up only to ease right back down between her shorts and underwear.

"Okay," he whispers back, his breath hot against her lips. The single, hushed word bursts with anticipation, making her heart beat faster still. Seriously, too fast to be healthy.

And then his mouth cozies right back up against hers, and his fingers start to move gently, and it's not too long at all before he gets her where she needs to go, maxi pad be damned. The Thursday Of Ickiness sure does end on a surprisingly good note.

Gah. Bless her sweet, wonderful sib. She's really gotta remember to slip a note or two or twelve in his lunch tomorrow.

by Double Pines

Insecurities

From over the rim of his red solo cup, Dipper Pines casually watches his twin sister out on the dance floor—or rather, the fancy living room with furniture haphazardly pushed up against the walls—as she twirls, shimmies, shakes what her mama gave her, and throws her hands in the air like she just doesn’t care with her friends, Leigh and Sarah. Mabel is actually a pretty good dancer, he thinks. Even if she doesn’t always know when to reel it in. Dipper’s foot taps just barely along to the beat of the music, some remix of a popular hip hop song. He makes a point to be as cool as possible about watching Mabel, even though he highly doubts anyone in this room is really paying attention to what he’s doing, anyway.

He switches his cup from one slightly damp palm to the other, brown eyes never straying too far from his sister. She looks really pretty in that sleeveless yellow sundress, a red Dahlia flower pinned up in her flowing brown curls. The way her silky hair whips around as she moves is sort of hypnotizing, let’s be real. And when she starts to roll her hips along with the fast-paced music, it’s *really* hard not to straight out creeper-stare at her ass and legs, the way they... well he doesn’t want to say the word *jiggle*, that sounds kind of crude, but uhh... okay yeah. There’s some definite jiggling goin’ on over there. And it’s definitely doing something for him. Dipper forces himself to look back up to her face, his cheeks dusted with pink. Nope, nah. Not the time, not the place.

Mabel catches Dipper’s eye where he’s awkwardly leaning up against the wall a good ways away from her. She makes a huge thing out of licking her thumb and adjusting her feet into a wide cowboy stance, then starts up the pretend-to-lasso-him move, but Dipper just throws her a *no way* look and a half smile, vigorously shaking his head. Mabel dramatically wilts at her brother’s refusal to be pretend-lassoed, her arms swinging down into a slump and her lower lip sticking out. But she’s soon back to grinning, waving a light hearted *psssh* gesture at him with her hand before twirling back over to her friends.

Dipper peels his eyes away from his twin, glancing around self-consciously as he takes another tiny sip of the cheap, light beer in his cup. There’s no way he’s going to be doing any dancing at this party. Especially not with Mabel, not here, amongst a hoard of judgey ‘cool kids’ from their school.

He isn't out to get wasted tonight, either, still holding the same nearly-full cup he's had since Mabel thrust it into his hands half an hour ago. No, his only jobs tonight are to keep an eye on his sister, and count the minutes until they can leave.

Dipper is a little fuzzy on how Mabel managed to get him here in the first place. He isn't even sure why *she* wanted to come so badly. It's Brittney Ayers' graduation party. Brittney Ayers as in super-popular-known-member-of-Aiden-Zimmerman's-close-friend-group Brittney Ayers. And Aiden Zimmerman as in Mabel's-ex-boyfriend-who-Dipper-still-had-a-few-low-key-hang-ups-about Aiden Zimmerman. Oh yeah. That tall, pointy-haired, oh-so-nice-guy was indeed at this party, Dipper caught a glimpse of the dude in an adjoining room when they first slipped in the front door (or rather, Dipper slipped, Mabel barreled). Dipper had quickly trained his eyes forward and pretended that he hadn't seen anything, praying that Mabel hadn't noticed Aiden over there, either.

Ugh. Why would Mabel want to come to a party she knows for a fact her ex will be at? He doesn't get it.

Mabel's reasoning for coming had been a mix of *"My friend Sarah Barnes is a close friend of Brittney's and she told me I had an invite and everything's all good in the neighborhood,"* and, *"Everyone will be there, plus I can't just avoid all of Aiden's friends forever, that's like, half the school, yo,"* and, *"Come onnn Dip, it'll be fuuun, it's her last shindig before she goes off to college and wait'll you see Brittney's flippin' house, it's amazeeeballls!"*

None of these arguments were the least bit compelling to the seventeen-year-old rising senior. He'd never been invited to nor gone to an infamous Brittney Ayers bash before, and that was always just fine and dandy with him. Dipper just isn't a huge crowd or wild-n-crazy-cool-kid-party sort of dude. He's a lay around in comfy pants and play videogames, read for pleasure, camp out in the woods to investigate strange footprints, small intimate gatherings sort of dude. Nothing wrong with that.

He supposes what *really* sold him on coming here was the look on Mabel's face when she'd started up the straight out begging, while secret-snuggling with him in his bed a few nights ago. Her eyes were big and shimmering, her pink lips pouting, her fingers softly curled into his t-shirt. She really, really wanted to go. He could tell. And Dipper couldn't help but also be very aware of the fact that Mabel doesn't really go to many parties since she'd stopped dating Aiden and started dating him. Yet another comparison that his jackass brain did not hesitate to draw up.

So... he'd begrudgingly agreed to tag along for the night.

Dipper is still on edge, though. The whole prom-dumping debacle is still fresh in people's minds, even though it happened over a month ago. And this is a party that is pretty much bursting with Aiden's close friends (ghhh, *why* do he and Mabel have to be here). Apparently Mabel could've stood to be a lot smoother about the way she ended it with her super-popular ex, from what he's overheard in passing.

Not that *he* has the slightest bit of a problem with the way Mabel dumped Aiden. On the contrary, he's an active supporter of it, since the whole reason Mabel dumped her oh-so-perfect-bf that night was so she could bike home in a poofy dress like a goofball and confess her love for *him*. Dipper. Yeah, that night was really real, he sometimes has to remind himself. One of the best nights of his life. After months and months of pining and self-loathing and believing that heart-wrenching thought that nothing could ever happen between them, and then after *another* month or so of way more depressing-and-pathetic pining after something *did* happen, the stormy seas have calmed, and he and Mabel are officially an item. A *couple*.

It amazes Dipper on the daily. Against a mountain of odds, Mabel actually *fell* for him, enough to want to *date* him, enough to want to call herself his girlfriend. This is not how things in his life usually go for him, like, there's got to be a catch, right? Seriously, it's been almost six weeks and it's still hard for him to believe he could really be this lucky. It *still* makes his stomach a stupid amount of giddy (almost to the point of queasiness, but good queasiness) whenever he hears her casually refer to him as 'boyfriend'—or bro-friend, or boyfwin, or main sib-squeeze, or significant brother, or whatever strikes her fancy that day. She'll switch names on him without warning, but Dipper couldn't care less; Mabel can call him whatever she damn well pleases as long as it means he's hers. Which he is. They really are a thing, seemingly weird as the concept sounds.

And... it's been going well. Like, really, *really* well. Unbelievably well. Zero catches to be found so far. It's hard for Dipper to stifle his giant, goofy smile just thinking about it.

After another fifteen minutes, Dipper has had his fill of being awkward guy on the sidelines while everybody else dances, despite how beautiful Mabel looks tonight. He waves to her until he gets her attention and gestures his finger over his shoulder, letting her know he's going off on his own for a bit, since Mabel doesn't look anywhere near done dancing. She gives him a wink and some cheerful finger guns from across the room, and the Pines twins temporarily part ways, Dipper sauntering out of the disco-ball-lit dancing room to go explore.

Eventually Dipper wanders outside, his eyebrows raising as he gets a load of the backyard. He's never been to a Brittney Ayers party before, sure, but damn. He doesn't think he's ever been to a *house* like this before (barring Northwest Manor/McGucket's new digs, but that place was a whole different ball game, more like a castle than a house).

There's an enormous, two-tiered, roofed porch with loads of fancy patio furniture and its own bar, soft lights strung up everywhere. One level seems to be for more dancing while the other for is for chilling and fake-bored laughing and smoking cigarettes, and weed too, by the smell of it... there's a brown stone pool with it's own friggin' waterfall that a bunch of seemingly-wasted jocks and girls in bikinis play chicken in (yeah, *that* seems real safe). There's a guest house, tiki torches, stone paths, benches everywhere, all wrapped up in this perfectly landscaped, hedged-in yard that seems to extend back forever before it hits the treeline.

Looking around, the whole thing sort of reminds him of Cher's over-the-top backyard from the movie *Clueless* (which he *only* knows because Mabel has forced him watch it with her like a million times... okay, fine, it's also an alright movie). This much space for one family seems a little much to Dipper, like it's laughable, really, how much grandeur this house is packin', but... yeah, he can sort of see why everybody is always yammering on about Brittney Ayers' parties.

Dipper takes another half-sip of beer, continuing his half hearted task of exploring as he waits for Mabel to tell him she's ready to go home. He's pleasantly surprised to run into a couple of his buddies from his old robotics team (well, they were still on the team, Dipper quit after two years to have more time to focus on schoolwork and the beginnings of college-searching), Aashish and Ruben. They look pleasantly surprised to see him here, too. Catching up with them eats away at some time, which Dipper is grateful for.

Aashish eventually leaves to go dance with a girl he'd been texting, leaving Dipper with just Ruben, who he isn't as good friends with and who is slightly awkward, isn't super great with social cues... Dipper offhandedly wonders how Ruben got an invite to this party as he listens to the short and stout, bespectacled, raven-haired dude talk about the same mechanical issue of the team's robot, Moe, for twenty solid minutes (not in a mean way! He's just genuinely curious, is all). Dipper nurses his same trusty red solo cup and diligently remains a polite, mildly interested conversation partner for a while longer before he spots a familiar curly haired, yellow-dress-wearing ball of energy tearing towards him on the lawn, coming up fast behind Ruben. Dipper grins into his cup, perking up at the sight of her. She bounds her way over to the two boys, casually slinging her arms around both their shoulders—Ruben's wide eyes and dropped jaw makes it look like he doesn't come into close contact with a lot of girls too often, and Dipper has to hold in a laugh.

"Hey guys! How're we all doin' here?" Mabel greets breathlessly, her cheeks rosy, her hair looking a bit more mussed than when Dipper last saw her. "Rubes! Long time no see my man! How's ol' robo-Moe doing?" Ruben starts to stutter something out but Mabel continues with her fast talking. "Cool thaz'awesome, keep up the good work! Hey-yo, Dippity-dawg, so, Mom just called. Looks like we gotta," she takes her arms back to dramatically sweep them down and back up again, snapping her fingers, "*bounce*. Family biz that needs immediate attention, you know how it goes." She grabs onto Dipper's band tee and starts to lead him away before anybody can say a word, addressing Ruben over her shoulder, who just stares after the pair blankly. "Sorry Rubes, gotta borrow this kid, official Pines business 'n all that jazz, thank youuuu, bye!"

Mabel proceeds to march ahead of him, dragging Dipper behind her. She weaves them both through the hoard of teenagers near the pool and on the patio, not letting go of him until they're back inside, standing in a corner of a hallway where the music is loud enough so they can talk semi-privately. Dipper quirks an eyebrow, fixing the shirt sleeve where Mabel jostled him. "Mom called? You didn't answer it where she could hear partying in the background, did you?"

Mabel lays a solemn hand on his shoulder. “Dipper, this is serious. This family biz needs *your* specific and immeeeeediate attention.”

Dipper frowns down at the small hand on shoulder and then back at his twin, starting to worry a little (but if it was a real emergency, wouldn’t Mom have called him too?). “Uh, okay? What’s going on?”

“Ahem. Our madre wants... you to go to the store... and pick up... some *cheese popcorn*,” Mabel tilts her head down to look at him knowingly through her bangs and her long, long lashes, her eyes growing comically wide, “immediately.” Then her face springs like a mouse trap from overly-serious to wacky and grinning.

Dipper blanches, his heart rate picking up speed. Shit. This was a set up. There was no Mom phone call, they’re not ‘bouncing’ home at all. Cheese popcorn is Mabel’s code word for when she’s in the mood to...

Dipper instantly starts shaking his head, lowering his voice and getting extremely shifty-eyed even though to anyone around them, it still sounds like they’re talking about snacks. “No. No cheese popcorn here. No way.”

But the more he shakes his head no, the faster Mabel shakes her head yes, and the wider her maniacal smile becomes. Soon she seems unable to contain the giddy energy she’s radiating and breaks down dancing in front of him—one hand cups around her mouth as she crouches down and bounces from foot to foot (she sort of looks like a skittering, bouncy leprechaun, if he had to describe it), sing-yelling “The Power” by Snap.

“I’ve got the powwwahh! S’gettin, s’gettin, s’gettin kinda hectic, s’gettin, s’gettin, s’gettin kinda hectic—”

A few heads turn in their direction. Dipper looks on with a squint and a half smile at his suddenly groovin’ sister, scratching the side of his face and trying not to be embarrassed by the attention she’s drawing to them. This is some pretty damn spirited public-silly-leprechaun-dance-rapping, even for Mabel... hold up. Dipper’s eyebrows skyrocket. “Wait, Mabel are you drunk?”

Mabel’s weird dancing comes to a halt and she gives him with a big, guilty smile. “Nooo... ‘course not...” She pokes his arm a few times, “are you... *not* drunk?”

“No. I mean, yes, I’m not—”

“Oh! *Well* then,” she puts a scandalized hand over her heart. “We can certainly fix that problem, brubs, let’s go get a delicious beverage in you. And then after that go hit up the snacks table that has the cheese popcorn on it if ya know what I’m sayin, ya know, ya know bro,” she elbows him suggestively, speaking out of the corner of her mouth, “mmhm bro, I think you know.”

Oh, crap. Dipper has only personally met drunk Mabel once before, at their cousins’ house last Christmas after some spiked ‘nog. And if last Christmas was any indication, drunk Mabel was not the most subtle, quiet, or discreet individual around. The literal complete

opposite, no joke. She'd revealed some pretty choice embarrassing info about herself, and about Dipper (no one else needed to know about the location of the mole he'd had to have removed when he was nine *or* about his vast collection of NOW CDs, come on, Mabel) to their giggling cousins, much to his chagrin. And *that* loud-mouthed drunk Mabel incident had happened long before he and Mabel had, hmm, what are the words he's looking for... oh yeah, *entered into a committed romantic incestuous relationship*.

Mabel was not a drinker. She did not hold her alcohol well. Dipper's protect-Mabel-and-their-relationship alarm bells start to blare like an air raid siren.

"Nope, I do not, no idea what you're talking about, sorry," Dipper affirms quickly, taking Mabel's shoulders and turning her around to start marching both of them towards the front door. "Ho-kay sis, I think we've seen enough of this place, don't you? I'm beat, it's bedtime, time to go home—"

Mabel breaks out of his shoulder-grip and spins around, an affronted expression on her face. "What?! Nooo! Party time's just gettin' *started*, bro!" She pokes him hard in the shoulder, reverting back to her over-the-top grinning. "Besides, I got a *surprise* for you, and I think you're really gonna like ittttt..." Dipper just shakes his head at her, his eyes perfect circles, trying to yell whatever-you're-thinking-is-bad-please-do-not at her with only his eyeballs. Mabel whines again, her arms flopping sadly. "Nooo don't give me that this-is-a-bad-idea Dipper look! Just—just hear me out." She swings her arm around his neck and crouches down conspiratorially, and after a discouraged huff, Dipper plays along and crouches down too. "Okay. Okay. Here's the plan. So. I'mma gonna leave, and you're gonna keep standing here all cool-like. And in a few minutes I'm gonna text you some supah-secret directions and you haaaave to follow them no matter *what*."

"Um, I do not agree to this. At all."

"Aw come on man, you don't even know what you're not agreeing to! Please Dipper, just play along? For me?" Mabel tilts her head far to the right and breaks out her giant brown begging eyes. Dammit. He can't stand that that move actually sort of works on him now. Dipper straightens back up, looking anxiously over his shoulder and back at his sister.

"Mabel, please, I just wanna—"

For some unknown reason Mabel takes Dipper's unfinished plea of wanting to go home as a hard yes, for she springs up, claps her hands several times, and gives him a pat on the back. "Awesomesauce! Don't forget, keep an eye on your phone! Follow the directions *exactly!*"

And she skips down the hall, her brown curls flying like a cape behind her as she rounds a corner and out of sight. Dipper's face falls as he stares down the hall after her. He closes his eyes and groans to himself before slumping back against the wall, defeated. Looks like drunk Mabel isn't the best listener, either. Sssonovabitch. Is he ever gonna be able to escape this got-real-old-real-fast party? And more importantly, what the hell is Mabel up to that involves public places, cheese popcorn, and weird secret texting directions?

Nothing that is a safe and-or good idea, most likely.

Dipper nervously taps his fingers against his leg as he waits for his phone to buzz in his shorts pocket, chewing his lip and actively avoiding eye contact with anybody who passes him. After a few minutes of nervous-sweating alone in a dim hallway, he finally feels that telltale vibration, and almost drops his phone on the ground in the process of fumbling to get it out of his pocket and opening the message as soon as possible. His anxiety mounts higher as his eyes quickly scan over the words.

hey brooo, time 4 a lil game of hide n seek.. if u wanna find ur ~*super special surprise*~, get ur cutie patootie up the stairs on the !-left-! side of the house and go to the door @ the end of the hall and be real sneaky bout going in there, then walk up to the big ol doubledoor closet and knock on it 2 the beat of funkytown. funkytown only!! very important 2 get that part rite!!!!

Buzz.

Ps it's the door @ the end of the hall w/ the schmancypants footstool thing in front of it, no1 will b in there cos its an OFF LIMITS ROOOM dun dun dunnnnn. and u better come nerd bc ur super special surprise is not leavin here w/o uuuuuu <333

Buzz.

Aaaaaand she caps off the string of messages with about twenty-five kissy face emojis. Real subtle, Mabel.

Dipper looks to his left and right from force of habit, clicking off his phone screen. It's really not hard to figure out what Mabel is up to, and he's more against the idea than ever. There were so many people here, so many people who knew exactly who the Pines twins were, at least in passing, *so* many people! She's crazy if she thinks he's gonna fool around with her *anywhere* in this house. There was no way. *No* freaking way.

But dammit—his shoulder slump—Mabel said she wasn't leaving without him, and she's up there waiting for him all excited, all by herself in some strangers' closet. . . ah, crap. Crap, crap, crap, he's going to have to go up there and get her, isn't he. And she isn't gonna make that task an easy one, that's a given.

Hands in his pockets, oh-so-casually glancing over his shoulders all along the way, Dipper strolls his way over to the wooden staircase that led to the rooms in the left wing of the house (this house has *wings!* honestly), and just as casually makes his way up. He passes a couple of laughing guys on the stairs, careful to keep his head down, annoyed at himself for forgetting to grab his hat on their way out of the house earlier. Luckily the two guys look pretty gone alcohol-wise and don't seem to notice him even a little bit. When Dipper reaches the top, his eyes immediately fall on the doors down the hallway that have furniture in front of them: one has a few stools in front of it, and the other, the door directly at the end, is blocked off by a large, ornate ottoman. Dipper swallows, his mouth feeling dry all of a sudden, as he fast-walks towards the latter. He looks over his shoulder one last time when he reaches it—no one there, entry is a go—then turns the knob, climbing over the ottoman and crossing the threshold.

Silently pushing the door shut behind him, Dipper turns around and surveys the room, his pulse racing. Muffled loud music thumps through the floor, the hip-hop beat out of place in this quiet, pristine, rich-looking, yet conservatively decorated bedroom. Just as Mabel predicted, there's not a soul in here. Apparently the furniture-in-front-of-the-door trick to keep people out is actually working out for Brittney.

Uh, until now, that is.

A familiar giggle spouts off from the closet in the corner of the room. Dipper rolls his eyes and shakes his head—yup, he's definitely in the right place. He approaches the closet nervously and cautiously, looking over his shoulder several times even though he just closed the door. Tiny beads of sweat form on the back of his neck. Ah, man. What is he *doing* in here? This is a bad idea, *such* a bad idea. . .

Dipper takes a breath, double-checking Mabel's specific directions for him on his phone before pocketing it and raising his fist. She's not going to leave on her own, she made that clear. And he's not about to leave her waiting in there all night. . . that would just earn him guilt and a smack to the back of the head later.

Okay. Okay. He's just gonna get in there, grab Mabel, and promptly get the hell out, and if she really wants to fool around, they can ditch this party and go home (which conveniently works out for him, 'cause that's all he's been wanting to do since they got here).

No sooner has he knocked the rhythm of "Won't you take me to Funkytown?" on one of the wooden double doors than two surprisingly strong arms pop out and grab his t-shirt collar to drag him inside; he yelps, suddenly finding himself in Brittney Ayers' parents' walk in closet. It smells sort of like a musty shoe store in here. And it's dark, but there's more than enough light streaming in from the crack between the closed doors to see the tipsy, lusty sparkle in Mabel's eyes as she stares him down, her fingers still curled into his shirt.

Quickly, Dipper puts his hands on his sister's shoulders to hold her off before she can jump him. "Mabel," he says as sternly as he can manage with her staring at him like that, "I'm only in here to drag your butt out of here."

"Mm, what's that? You wanna do what with my butt?" Mabel giggles and reaches around to pinch his ass. Dipper flinches, his left eye twitching a little, but stands firm.

"Nope. I mean it. We're leaving, c'mon." He takes her hand and tries to pull her towards the closet doors but Mabel digs the heels of her jelly sandals into the fluffy carpet without budging. Yeesh, she's strong.

"You don't wanna make out with me even a liiiiittle bit?" She juts out her bottom lip, giving him her most hardcore puppydog eyes, airily swishing the skirt of her cute yellow dress back and forth.

That gets him to hesitate—only for a second, though. "What I want is irrelevant right now," Dipper says matter-of-factly. "We're in *public* Mabel, and like half the frickin' school is at this house, there is absolutely *no* way—"

"—*Cheesepopcorn!*" Mabel whisper-yells just before she barrels forward, snakes her arms tightly around his neck and cuts off his stern talkin'-to by locking her lips onto his.

"*Mmph*—! No, Mabe—*stmm*—" Dipper's head reels back but Mabel's follows too quickly for him to escape. Overwhelmed by extra-forward tipsy Mabel, Dipper finds himself closing his eyes and letting her attack his face with her lips, despite himself. Gah, he's weak.

"Kiss—kiss—kiss—I—love—kissin'—this—*face!*" Mabel giggles between pecks to his nose, his scruffy chin, both his cheeks, and of course, lips. She coaxes his mouth open with some choice lip movements and darts in her tongue to run it along his, and Dipper is immediately greeted with the strong taste of alcohol. He breaks off the kiss, his eyes widening incredulously.

"Holy shit Mabel, how much did you drink?"

"I dee kayyyy, like, four?" She laughs before sloppily smushing her lips against his again.

"O-okay, but four what," Dipper continues the next time he manages to free his mouth from his sister's overeager kisses. "Like four beers, or four of those juice things, or—"

"Shhhh already, you're ruining the magic. Ya nerrrrrd." She presses a dramatic '*muah*' of a peck to the corner of his mouth, pulling back to gaze at him tipsily-but-sweetly. "My nerd. My magic-ruining nerd. Ahh, this guyyy," she cups his pink cheeks, pushing them together hard enough to give him fish lips, "I flippin *love* this guy—" And the Mabel kiss attack recommences.

"*Mm*—but, but—" Dipper tries, but the stutters abruptly stop when he feels his twin's hand slide down to cup (more like *grab*) the crotch of his shorts. He sucks in a sharp breath and bites his lip as Mabel presses her lips to his neck with a little hum. He lets her rub him

in relative silence for a bit before his protective instincts kick back in. “Oh shit, ohh shit, nope, this is nooot a. . .” he murmurs, his voice light and strained, cutting himself off with a gasp when he feels her lightly squeeze his steadily hardening junk. “*A-ah*, Mabel no, this isn’t a good idea, someone could walk in—”

“Dipper shut upppp and let me do stuff to you, I jus’wanna do stuffff,” she purrs against his neck.

Fuck. More blood rushes into his groin at her words, much against his will. “Come on, Mabel. You’re drunk. . .” Dipper says softly, hating that he was still letting this happen. This was breaking like, every protect-his-and-Mabel’s-relationship rule in the book.

“Yeah, well, I’d wanna do stuff to you if I was sober too. So *nyah*,” she sticks her tongue out at him, “And *eff-why-eye*, brother, I’m not *that* drunk. I’mma perfectly consenting lady.” She pulls back to look him in the eye and he can see her slightly glazed-over eyes lighting up with an idea. Her lips stretch into a wide, toothy grin. Ohh boy. . . “Ya know what, my lil’ Dipster? I jussst realized what I wanna do to you.”

She pokes a glittery blue fingernail into the center of his chest at the word ‘*you*.’ Dipper’s heart leaps. “Mabel, please, let’s just go back downstairs, w-we can go home if you want to—”

“Mm-mm, already decided! This is happenin’ cappenin’. Ruh-now. Oh my gosh, I can’t believe I’ve never done this to you before,” Mabel muses with a giggle, reaching for his belt, “and we’ve been a thing for *how* long, now? Suh-say *whaaat*? This’s *overdue*, my dude.”

She not-so-gracefully flops down to her knees and Dipper goes full bug-eyed, his face flushing pure crimson as what she’s got in mind for him finally sinks in.

“*What?* Mabels are you crazy? We can’t—we are *not* doing this *here*—”

“Oooh but I think we areeee,” Mabel singsongs, her clumsy, excited fingers already in the process of undoing his belt buckle. Dipper’s eyes dart skittishly from Mabel-on-her-knees to the closet door and back to Mabel-on-her-knees. He gnaws on his bottom lip, his conviction to move forward with the extract-Mabel-from-the-closet plan suddenly faltering. Due to certain reactions going on down below, there’s a preeetty big part of him (well, okay, average-sized part of him, according to that time he broke down and broke out a ruler) that would very much like to back down and uh, y’know, just let Mabel do her thing, but—

—But no. No, no *way*, what the hell is he even thinking, they can’t—practically half their class was at this party and if somebody were to walk in here and find Mabel with his—*in her mouth*—

The hypothetical, but entirely horrifying scenario has Dipper hastily grabbing his sister’s hands, stopping her in her tracks. He throws her the strictest look he can muster.

“*Mabel!* It’s not happening, okay? Give it up.”

She pouts hard, collapsing into a dramatic slouch. “Aww, no fair. Other people git’ta do stuff with their boyfriends in closets at parties, how come I don’t?”

Dipper frowns. “You know why. I should not have to explain to you why this is a horrible idea.”

Mabel blows an obnoxiously wet raspberry. “C’mon, man, no one’s lookin’ for us, and no one’s gonna come in.”

“You don’t know that for sure, so can we please just—just...” Ahhcrap. It’s hard to form sentences when Mabel is where Dipper has only ever seen her in his dreams, on her knees in front of him, batting her eyelashes in a way that’s somehow both funny and cute, dancing her fingers along the backs of his thighs... Dipper looks away, talking fast. “Canwepleasegobackdownstairs? Please?”

“Sure we can, bruh! In like, eight minutos.” She taps her chin. “Well, maybe more like four. *Haa*. Jay-kay broseph, seven, totally at least seven fo’ sho’. Mua-ha-heee.”

Dipper grumbles up towards the ceiling of the spacious closet, choosing to ignore the shot at his bedroom stamina. Ugh, she’s not *listening* to him. As usual. “Mabel, we’re not... I feel like you’re not getting that, that you and me, we can’t just...”

“Are you *suuurioussly* turning me down right now?” His sister-and-now-also-girlfriend interrupts him with a skeptical half giggle, half scoff. “Cosss, um... it reeeeeeally doesn’t seem like you wanna do that, bro. Just sayin’.” To prove her point she leans forward to nuzzle her nose along the evident lump in his shorts, giving him a saucy wink. She laughs when his shorts bulge gives a little twitch in response. Dipper drops his red face into his hands, letting out a torn groan.

“Dammit, Mabel... you’re making it really hard to be the responsible one here.” Mabel says nothing, just keeps nuzzling, wiggling her eyebrows and giving his clothed crotch a teasing peck. And then another... ohh god... Dipper rakes his teeth over his bottom lip. His voice is on the high-pitched side when he finally manages to speak again. “Really, *really* hard... ngh.”

“That ain’t the *only* thing really hard around these parts, right Mabel? Haha, good one, Mabel! Ayyyyyo!” Mabel lifts her hand victoriously and gives herself a high five for a joke well done. Dipper rolls his eyes.

“Ha-ha, soo funny.”

“I know right? I’m hilarious! But anyways. The responser—the responsible thing. Wait what was I gonna say again?” She hiccups, which somehow jogs her memory. “Oh yeah! I was gonna say, *blarghhhhh!* Responsibility is so *boring*, Dipper-ee-doo. It’s—s’why you got me. Your beautilmous girlfwin. I help you let loose. Yeee-haw.” Mabel’s fingers skitter up to lift his shirt again, revealing the belt she’s already unbuckled. She pauses and makes a ‘whaa’ face, waiting for him to stop her, but... Dipper can’t bring himself to do

it. Grinning a *very* excessive grin that involves all her teeth, Mabel slowly unbuttons the tan cargo shorts and inches down the zipper, looking a scary amount of elated. “Muahaa! I knew you’d see it my way, bro-bro.”

“M-Mabel.”

She pauses, her fingers hooked in between his shorts and the waistband of his underwear. “Yesss?”

Dipper rubs his neck. “I just . . . ground rules, y’know? If, if we hear anyone coming—”

“Stop right away and pretend we weren’t just havin’ sketchy bro-sis times in a closet. Aye aye cap’n, ‘tis a promise,” she salutes him. “So that’s a for real green light, then?”

Dipper gives her a nervous little nod, taking in a deep, trembling breath, his eyes directed up at the ceiling. He still thinks this is a terrible idea. But dammit . . . Mabel is practically begging to go down on him. Like, come on. He’s only human. His willpower is only so strong.

“Yayyy surprise bee-jays!” Mabel cheers, yanking his shorts down so that his erection bobs out suddenly, on the verge of poking through the slit in his boxers. Dipper winces, breathing in sharply.

“H-heh, take it easy down there, will you?”

“Oopsie. My bad.” She sends him a small, apologetic smile and he manages one back at her. “No worries bro, me an’ lil’ Dips here are like, *besties* now. I proomise to do right by him.” Dipper blushes at her weird-but-gets-him-goin’-anyway dirty talk as she carefully eases down his underwear until they’ve joined his shorts around his ankles. She giggles at the sight of him swaying in the air right in front of her face.

“Hey there, friend. Gettin’ a little more up close an’ personal today,” she coos in a voice that’s a lot more silly than it is sexy, but she’s trying anyway, which Dipper happens to find adorable (just add it to the zillions of reasons why he loves Mabel). Her nails graze up the fine hair on his thighs as she pokes out her tongue and sidles forward on her knees, leaning in. Dipper starts to hold his breath without realizing it. Mabel keeps leaning until her tongue just *barely* touches the very tip of his dick, making his body jump the slightest bit. She holds her position, slurs out, “Oneee mithithipeeeee,” and then reels away, clapping her hands together.

“Shabam! Successful blow job, check. Good work out there today everyone!”

Dipper actually starts spluttering. “Wh—that—u-um, okay?”

“Haha! I’m *kidding*, dork!”

“Oh—right, haha—”

Dipper's awkward laughter dies a quick death when he suddenly feels Mabel's full, soft lips pressed against the head of his dick, where she pecks him. One of her hands takes hold of his shaft, lifting him up so she can lavish the underside with teasing little licks. O-oh, holy shit. A strangled sound escapes him against his will as Mabel affectionately kisses her way up his flushed, sensitive skin before sucking gently on the tip, circling him with her tongue—and that cord inside of him is suddenly pulled taut.

Fuck, man, just, the sight of her down there between his legs, the *heat*, the wetness of her mouth and texture of her tongue, how is he ever going to... she keeps up with the dainty sucking on the very tip of him and the cord gets pulled tighter, and tighter, and when Mabel glances up to look at him with her best cutesy innocent face, Dipper quite abruptly finds himself at the brink (no thanks to the repeating phrase of *'oh my god my dick is in her mouth she is sucking my dick oh my god'* that won't stop blaring off in his brain like an amazed, horny siren)—oh no. No, no, oh god, he can't be done already, now that's just fucking embarrassing. Seriously man? She literally just started!

Dipper forces himself to look away, his eyelids slamming shut tightly. He clenches his teeth, trying to focus on breathing. He feels her tongue run firmly back and forth several times over the slit, as if she's trying hard to *really* get a taste of him, then slither its way down to press and lick the sensitive spot just under the head—a gasp bursts from his lips, followed by a whimper. Oh fuck, how is she so good at this? This is the first time she's done it, right? Okay, you can do this, man. Just Inhale, exhale. Do not explode—*do not explode*—

Luckily (depends on how he looks at it) Dipper feels something a little too sharp scraping over him, the resulting surprise and slight pain taking the worst of the edge off. He jolts, his hips instinctively edging away. “A-ah, Mabel, teeth—teeth—”

Mabel backs right off of him, her cheeks flushed and her expression a little shamefaced. “Oh, sorry, whoopsie! Did I hurt you?”

“Nah, I-I'm fine, it's okay.” He shoots a crooked smile her way to let her know it really is fine. She gratefully smiles back at him, her lips then pursing in thought.

“Huh. Do teeth really feel that bad?”

“Um? They're not... great. Sensitive area, you know?” Dipper shrugs, glancing back up at the ceiling, “Also teeth imply biting. Which *is* bad. And scary.”

Mabel makes the a-ok sign with both hands. “Teeth, bad ‘n scary. Readin’ ya loud ‘n clear, broface.”

She doesn't give him a chance to get another word in before she leans forward and takes him in her mouth again, quickly upping the ante by bobbing her head down to fit as much of him in there as she can, her fingertips tracing his hipbones and caressing down his thighs. Dipper's legs tremble, his knees going weak.

“Ohh, f-fuck...”

Mabel slowly moves off of him with a wet *pop*, a trail of drool already dribbling down her chin—Dipper’s eyes nearly pop out of his head as he watches it drip. “Good ‘oh eff-word’ or bad ‘oh eff-word’?” she asks him breathlessly, a ridiculous amount of cheeriness in her tone.

“Good,” he gasps out. “Really really good.”

“Haa. I knew that, I just wanted to hear ya say it.”

Dipper attempts an eye roll but doesn’t get the chance to finish it before his eyes are rolling into the back of his head, eyelids fluttering, jaw slackening, because Mabel has moved her head down again and jumped right back into the spirited-blow-job fray—sinking a good ways down his shaft, sucking hard as she moves back up, her tongue caressing him all the way... repeating the action several mind-numbing times, then pausing to hold him in her hand and lick him as enthusiastically as he’s seen her go at a bomb-pop on one particularly hot Fourth of July—uhh yeah, he takes about a hundred thousand mental pictures of that one. And then Mabel catches his eye, giving him a goofy wink while she sucks and slurps at the head before taking the *vast* majority of him in her mouth all over again, clearly unphased by the loud, crude noises that fill the closet space as she bobs her head, again and again, her gorgeous, fluffy curls bouncing on her creamy shoulders, ohh *sweet Jesus Christ thisisthefuckingbestthingever*—

A few of Mabel’s fingers start to pump up and down what she can’t fit past her lips. Dipper moans, feeling blissfully overwhelmed. He nearly jumps and then gulps when he suddenly feels the fingertips of her other hand tracing over his balls, his Adam’s apple bobbing hard along his neck. After a bit more delicate tracing she cups them in her hand, ever-so-gently thumbing him—oh holy fuck, he doesn’t think she’s ever touched him there before, why does this feel so amazing?! Dipper’s face becomes a ridiculous shade of red, his mouth hanging wide open, his feet shuffling a little as he tries to keep his balance standing on these parted, useless gelatin legs of his. Goddamn, he can’t take his eyes off her. Can’t stop watching himself disappear and then reappear past her swollen pink lips... although he probably should, because yet again, even though it’s probably barely been another minute, he’s finding himself dangerously close to the finish line.

Oh, ohhh *shit*, yup, if things keep going exactly the way they’re going for another ten seconds or so, he’s gonna shoot off like a damn bottle rocket. He’s supposed to ask before he does that anywhere near her mouth, right? Aren’t those the standard rules? Shit, he needs to say something to her, like, *now*, oh god, how do you even word a question like that? To your twin sister? *Shitshitshit*. It’s really hard to think about anything besides how good this feels, and he *really* does not want it to be over so soon, but fuuuck, she is relentless...!

“*Nnghhahh*, u-um, wait, Mabelcouldyoumaybejust—”

“Wmmffth?” She mumbles around him before she moves back and lets him fall out of her mouth with a ‘bwahp’ noise that makes his stomach drop like a rock. “Whuzzat?”

“Ss—slow down a little maybe?” Dipper squeaks, his eyes screwed shut.

“How cooome?” Mabel asks innocently, busying herself by dragging her lips up and down the side of his length.

He whines helplessly. “Are you gonna make me say it?”

“...No. Wait. Yis.”

“Fine,” Dipper says, his voice tight. “I, am about to... you know, and, i-if I’m being honest I would rather not do that yet because you are really, really good at this and also I... I do not know if you want that happeninginyourmouth so uh,” the words tumble out in a rush before Dipper lets his head flop back against the rack of suit jackets behind him, breathing hard, “yeah, that’s where I’m at. Do with that information what you will, I guess?”

“You know what, I *will* do with that information with what I will do.”

“That made no se—*gnuhh*—”

Oh, yikes. Thaaaat was an objectively embarrassing sound he made there just now. Aaand she’s back on him again. But to Mabel’s credit, aside from that initial surprise *nom* she does majorly let up, slowing down to nuzzle and tease him and allow him to calm himself a little, rather than unceremoniously chucking his awkward sweaty self over the finish line.

Dipper hums a deep, dreamy sound. He closes his eyes and lets his head loll back against the rack of expensive suits, very much in heaven. He’s suddenly super fucking glad he dragged himself out to this not-so-stupid-after-all graduation party. Sighing contentedly, he starts to stroke his long fingers through his sister’s soft brown locks, eventually using both hands to gently massage her scalp. Mabel purrs on him, sending a shiver down his spine and a stomach-flipping throb to his cock. She zigzags her tongue along the underside of his shaft when she pulls off him again, moving tantalizingly slow, causing Dipper to let out a long, amorous groan.

“Mmm, tha’feels sooo nice, Dip,” She murmurs against his pulsing skin, her eyes closed. He shudders and says nothing, just keeps stroking her hair. When he opens his eyes again he finds her staring up at him. His heart flutters up a storm. “Will you lemme know when you’re close again?”

“Y-yeah, of course.”

“Kewl beans. And, uhm, *you can do ehtht*, bee-tee-dubs.”

Dipper squints in confusion, the *Waterboy* accent throwing him off. “Uh, I what?”

“You can do your thang. In muh mouth. Just give me a little warning, kay-kay?” Mabel’s eyebrows wiggle up and down like no tomorrow, her cheeks very, very red. And he doesn’t intend for his jaw to drop so obviously and stupidly, but it does, and there was really no stopping it. Dipper’s entire body flushes anew, his cock jumping noticeably in her hand, and when his brain automatically replays Mabel’s last few sentences it twitches again.

Dude. Say words already.

“Oh—um yeah I’ll, I’ll definitely—yeah. Cool.” Er. . . no lie, he almost came all over the place just from hearing her give him the permission.

Mabel giggles at his super-suaveness, gifting him with another one of those sweet smiles that make him sort of, yeah, straight up weak at the knees. Her lashes fall shut and she sticks out her tongue to thoroughly clean up the pre that won’t stop leaking out of him. Dipper’s breathing picks up volume and speed once again, the pressure that’s been slowly simmering higher edging closer to its peak—oh fuck, he’s so close to cumming and this time he’s entirely ready for it, needing it, actually—his half-lidded eyes greedily rake in the sight of Mabel’s tongue dragging from base to tip and back again in one long swipe, then she lifts him up with one hand while her tongue circles around to trail curiously away from his cock, down to his balls, and Dipper hears himself moan again, a breathy, high-pitched sound—*oh Jesus oh holy shit she just did that she’s still doing it*—oh god wow okay so obviously he knew Mabel loved him long before she put her mouth all over his nuts of her own free will and volition, but now it’s officially official, she definitely, definitely loves him—Oh god oh god this is unreal, like it’s insane how absurdly good this feels, how easily capable she is of making him feel like *this*, holy crap he loves her, sooo fucking *much oh my god*—

“Mabes I-I’m,” is all Dipper manages to huff out, his fingers curling into her hair. The words are barely audible through his ragged breathing, but Mabel catches it and flies up to draw the tip of his cock back into her mouth. Her head moves with quick little bobs, eyes sparkling and smiling up at him, hand jacking him with abandon, plainly enjoying what she’s doing to him, *for* him, and for the life of him Dipper can’t get his head around any of it, he really can’t—man, who knew tonight would turn out to be like, one of the best nights of his life—

But then the sound of faraway-but-definitely-approaching footsteps registers in his ears, and the little slice of heaven Dipper is floating on comes crashing back down to Earth. Violently.

“Ohshit,” Dipper squeaks, his heart leaping in the most sickening way, hot, prickling fear settling in so fast that it spooks away his impending orgasm. The savage clash of dread and arousal makes him dizzy. “Shit,” he repeats weakly when Mabel shows zero signs of stopping, “I-I think someone’s coming—fuck, okay, we gotta stop—” His legs wobble and his dick throbs in protest as Dipper backs his hips away with every intention of dashing down to yank his shorts back up, but Mabel follows by scooting forward on her knees, her arms hugging around his legs, not letting him get away from her.

“Whaaat, like they’re just headed straight for Brittney’s parents’ closet? Yeah, right.” She smirks and makes a show of popping the head of his cock *just* past her lips with a little ‘*thwip*’ that makes him grunt.

“For all we know, yeah, they are!” Dipper hisses frantically. But unfortunately four-drink Mabel doesn’t seem to be catching onto the gravity of the situation, only keeps sucking on him slowly, laughter in her eyes, while Dipper’s eyes fill with crippling panic. The footsteps get closer.

“Mabel, please—”

“*Mmmmff*—”

He’s answered with nothing but a slurp, and the footsteps definitely seem to be headed in this direction, *holy fuck*, what is she trying to do—?

“Mabel *please*, just—seriously, we can’t—Mabel, *stop!*” Dipper hisses out the harsh whisper with a notable tremble in his voice as he does the first thing he can think of and pushes hard on her shoulders, effectively freeing himself from her mouth with a loud, wet gasp on her part. He starts to dash down for his shorts but freezes in place when the door to Brittney’s parents’ room creaks open—oh god, holy fucking god—

He waits, hardly daring to breathe. The footsteps get closer, then pass and continue into the attached master bathroom. After he hears sound of a door closing, Dipper breathes out, a relieved hand at his heart. When he looks down again, he finds his sister staring up at him, her eyes wide and hurt.

Oh. . . uh oh.

“That—that wasn’t—” Dipper starts the sentence without knowing how he would end it, and Mabel doesn’t wait around for him to fumble for words.

“Did you have to shove me so hard?” she asks, her former bubbly-tipsy voice turned cold, tears gathering in her eyes. Oh no. Tears? Oh god, he did basically shove her, didn’t he? Nice fucking move, man.

“Shit, Mabels, I’m sorry. It was just—I thought—”

“Someone was comin’, yeah. Well, they didn’t come in here, so.” She looks away from him, glaring at a pile of shoeboxes in the corner.

“I’m sorry I pushed you, I shouldn’t’ve done that. God, I shouldn’t’ve let this happen in the first place,” Dipper says in a small voice, dragging a hand down the side of his face. She responds with nothing but silence so his defensive babble-whispers keep coming. “But Mabel, come on, someone got close enough to come in the room and you wouldn’t even. . . ! Like you *promised* me earlier you would stop and you didn’t, I was just trying to—”

“—Ohh my freaking gosh, Dipper, if you say ‘*protect us*’ one more time I’m gonna. . . *blargh!*” She waves her hands around in the air in a frustrated manner before letting them thump to the floor. Dipper frowns deeply, falling silent. What the hell was that supposed to mean? Mabel wipes the drool from her chin with one hard drag of her hand and teeters to her feet, avoiding his eyes. “Forget it. Jus’ leave me alone.”

And she walks herself right out of the closet, silently shutting the door behind her, leaving Dipper alone in the dark with his shorts and underwear still pooled around his ankles.

He stares, shocked and upset, at the closed closet door for a good long while before coming to his senses. There's still someone in the adjoining bathroom, and he's standing alone in a closet half naked like an idiot. *Get it together, man.* Shakily, Dipper bends to pull his shorts back up, fiddling and squinting in the darkness to get his belt re-buckled, noting with an annoyed sigh that his erection has mostly survived the awkward madness. Great. Just *great*. He glares at it and stubbornly finishes buckling his belt anyway. His brain appears to be in staticky standby mode as it attempts to process the last five minutes of his life; eventually Dipper smacks his hands against his forehead, dragging them heavily down his flushed face with a groan.

Well, that went reeeal fucking well...

Okay, all that stuff he thought about this day being the best and suddenly loving this party? Yeah, he takes it all back. The whole thing is back to sucking.

He grimaces a little. *Ugh, bad choice of words.*

Dipper reluctantly glances back down at the boner that he just squashed back into his shorts. Then of *course* the very recent image of Mabel between his legs and shamelessly going to town on him pops into his head, and he's right back to being painfully hard, the bulge in his shorts super obvious. He grumbles out a whine, leaning his head against the wall, heat radiating off his cheeks. Ugh, he can't go back down there like this...

Cursing himself, this dumb party he never wanted to come to, and whoever just haaaad to use the bathroom in this blocked-off room, Dipper rolls his eyes and begrudgingly reaches for his belt again. But he stops halfway through pulling it out of the loop.

Man... the idea of jerking off at Brittney Ayers' grad party, alone in the dark in her parents' closet like a creepo, after everything that just happened (and after he was *this* close to cumming into Mabel's warm, eager mouth, *god*), is... eugh. It is very fucking unappealing, to say the least.

Yeahh... pass.

With that Dipper plops himself down on the carpet, gearing up his mental arsenal of boner-killing-thoughts. The fact that Mabel ditched him in here all alone with his pants down is a pretty effective boner-killing thought in itself, but he tries hard to avoid thinking about that one. Dipper sighs, resting his head in his hands as he waits for his erection to go down.

Downstairs, Mabel slowly makes her way through the crowd towards the little side room where the table full of drinks is kept, feeling annoyingly sober all of a sudden. Music is back to thumping so loudly that it vibrates in her chest, but she's not feeling the idea of puttin' her dancey-pants back on, either. She wipes her mouth again with the back of her hand, swiping off some of the spit she missed, her cheeks pink.

Stupid Dipper, with his obsessive, stifling relationship rules and regulations. . . so what if he was right about her going back on her promise to stop if she heard anything. No one actually came in! And dangit, for once she didn't want to have to think about the rules, she just wanted to be a regular ol' cool cat at a party with her bf and finish living out dream fantasy number seventy-six. . . and he was so close, so deliciously wrapped around her lil' finger, she just wanted to follow through and *get* him there, like, what's so wrong with that? Some would say that's the mark of a *good* girlfriend, not a bad promise-breaky one! And certainly not one who deserves to get *pushed* while she's in the middle of. . . of. . . stuff. Ugh, that was so flippin' humiliating. *Ughhh*.

Too caught up in her pouting to acknowledge any of the peeps around her, Mabel sad-floats her way up to the drinks table, starting to pour more that jungle juice stuff into a fresh red solo cup. She jumps and nearly spills her drink when a loud snort sounds off like, *right* behind her.

"Oh my god, you were right, there she is—hey, Mabel. Gotta give you credit girl, you got balls, showing your face here."

At that voice and those words, Mabel's tummy shrivels a little. She gulps, fixing her face into an expression that's as friendly as she's capable of—then turning around to find her personal space super invaded by her good ol' overbearing red-headed ex-friend Jenna, and one of Aiden's soccer teammates, fellow forward Jesse Spitz, who is pretty much renowned for his hot-headedness—watching some of Aiden's games this semester, Mabel remembers him getting carded nearly *every* single game for starting shiz with the other team.

Oh dear. These are very much Aiden's friends and *not* hers. Not anymore.

"Um, hi?" are the only words that come to mind. Mabel shrinks back a bit without meaning to, holding her half filled cup close to her chest.

"Hiii," Jenna flashes a grossly saccharine smile and reaches to pluck the cup from Mabel's hands and set it on the table. "Enjoying yourself, hun?"

"Um. . . yeahhhss?" Mabel's eyes flick nervously back and forth between her two new close-quarters non-budz.

"Cool, cool. So, you finally gonna spill the reason why you publically dumped Aiden like a cold, heartless bitch?"

Oh fudge, oh fudge. Not this, not here, not now—it's hard for her not to just start with the silent tears on the spot. Touchy subject, an' all that. God, stay calm, stay cool, Mabel-girl.

"Okay, you know, I'm not. . . I-I'm not gonna talk about stuff that's none of your guys' business, so," Mabel mumbles, trying to both keep the tremble out of her voice and dodge her way around them, but Jesse—who is a super tall, super built, quite overbearing senior—steps in her way. She tries not to let her face crumble as she stares up at him, stunned. What the heck do they want her to say?

“Oh hell no. You dump our *best* friend for no goddamn reason and then have the nerve to show up to our other best friend’s party? And you’re gonna tell us it’s none of our business?”

Mabel’s heart races so hard she feels dizzy, and she *hates* the way she can feel herself shrinking back against the table, hates how small her voice is coming out. “Sarah Barnes told me I should come, she said it was fine...”

“I’m sorry, is Sarah’s name Brittney? Obviously wasn’t her call, Mabe-babe,” Jenna sing-songs.

“Leave me alone, okay? I didn’t do anything wrong!”

“Didn’t do anything—” Jenna lets out the most incredulous scoff, “*Wow!* Wow. Why are you such a fucking *bitch*, Mabel? You’re still trying to put on the whole innocent-girl act? You’re *still* not gonna give anyone a reason why you kicked him to the curb like he was trash. Do you even have a reason? Did you just do it for kicks?”

Mabel’s eyes well up—nope, no stoppin’ them tears now. “*No*, of course not! I-I—”

“Like, what, you think you’re going to do *better*? Newsflash, honey! Aiden was way out of your league, you’re just the loser weird girl he felt sorry for enough to date, for *whatever* reason... and we’re not okay with you shitting all over our friend, so, let me put this into words you can understand—you’re not fucking welcome to hang around us anymore! Since your dumb ass can’t seem to pick up on that very obvious fact yourself.”

Jesse takes a half step towards her. “How ‘bout you get the fuck out of here, weird little bitch. Yeah?” Mabel’s lip quivers, her eyes falling to her pink shoes, tears rolling down her cheeks despite how hard she’s trying to hold them in her eyeballs, and honestly she would very much *like* to get the heck out of here at this point but they’re still not letting her get by—

“*Hey!*” Mabel hears a familiar shout that somehow fills her heart with both relief and dread, and turns her head to see her brother standing in the doorway, his fists nearly shaking with rage, his eyes narrowed into slits. Jesse and Jenna’s eyebrows raise and they give each other a knowing look as Dipper strides over, his expression seething. He inserts himself right up in the small space between them and Mabel—even though Jesse towers at least half a foot over Dipper—without a beat of hesitation, his eyes dark and glaring. “What the fuck is wrong with you, man? Back off!”

Jenna barks out a mocking laugh. “Oh my god, of *course*, here comes the twin brother to the rescue, *as usual*.”

Dipper reaches back to grab Mabel’s hand tightly, his voice quivering with thinly veiled anger as he starts to lead her away. “Come on Mabel, we’re leaving.”

“Uh, ‘scuse me, we weren’t done talking.” Jesse pulls harshly on the sleeve of Dipper’s shirt, forcing the much shorter boy him to spin back around and face him. “Look, Pines, this doesn’t involve you, alright? Why don’t you go get a life or whatever, instead of following your bitch sister around twenty-four-seven?”

Dipper’s brow crumples and his mouth opens but Jenna jumps in before he can utter a word. “Aw, is it because you’re a fucking loser with no friends?”

Jesse’s voice comes in right behind Jenna’s, his voice patronizing and dripping with fake curiosity, his hand still gripping Dipper’s shirt. “I mean you are kind of a freak, man. Do you like, wanna fuck her or something? Is that why you’re always trailing at her heels like a fuckin’ dog?” Dipper’s eyes widen the slightest bit, and he looks like he’s just been punched in the gut, and behind him Mabel’s stomach drops so hard she feels like she could throw up. “Holy shit, look at his face, Jen, I bet he does! Haha, that is pretty sick, bro—”

Dipper’s arms burst outwards like a spring, making hard contact with Jesse’s chest, causing the significantly bigger teenager to stumble back a few steps. “*Fuck* you, dude.”

Some “*Ooohs*,” are muttered from a few of the onlookers in the room. Jesse’s face twists with rage. “Oh-ho, you did *not* just do that.”

“Oh fuck—” Dipper only has time to shove Mabel off to the side as the twins take in that split second image of Jesse charging them—she almost stumbles to her knees, but rights herself at the last second and whips back around just in time to see Jesse’s right fist make sickeningly harsh contact with Dipper’s face, the nauseating sound of it making her feel as if her chest just took a blow as well.

No, no, *no*—

Dipper grunts out a short cry as he crashes back into the table and against the wall, drinks spilling everywhere. He’s only down there a few seconds, quietly cursing in pain, before Jesse grabs the front of his shirt and effortlessly hauls him back to his feet, getting right up in his stunned face. “The fuck did you just say to me, Dipshit Pines? You wanna repeat that?”

Mabel bounds forwards, grabbing at Jesse’s shoulder, “*Stop*, leave him alone—!” But without even looking back at her Jesse pushes her away. She trips backward, bracing to fall on her butt, but someone catches her, helping her back to her feet, and then *Aiden’s* voice is yelling out from right next to her ear, his hands coming away from her waist as he stomps past her—

“What the hell is going on, Jesse, what the fuck?! Put him down!”

Jesse doesn’t oblige right away, rolling his eyes as he reluctantly turns to look at Aiden, while Dipper seems frozen in his grip, staring at Aiden through wide eyes even though his left one is already starting to swell. “Come on, he was trash talkin’ you, man—”

“He was *not*!” Mabel is quick to counter, her voice borderline hysterical.

Jenna butts in with a disbelieving guffaw, “Okay, you should’ve heard the shit *she* was saying about you—”

Aiden puts his hands to his forehead. “Holy crap, I don’t care who was trash talking who, just put him down! I fucking told you guys I didn’t need you to defend me! Like oh my god, are you *serious* with this right now?” He gestures frantically to where Dipper’s shirt is still stretched out from being held in two tight fists. Jesse sighs and utters a grumble that’s nearly a growl, but finally lets go, taking a step back. Dipper takes a step back too, breathing hard, his back bumping against the trashed table of drinks. His shaky hands fumble to smooth out his shirt.

“Dude—” Jesse starts, but Aiden holds up a hand and shakes his head, glaring down at the floor.

“Just—no. Not now, man. Jesus Christ.” Jesse and Jenna seem to be stricken into silence at Aiden’s not-so-supportive reaction. Aiden grumbles in bewildered aggravation, turning back towards Mabel. “. . . You alright, Mabel?”

Finding that she’s apparently been stricken into silence, too, Mabel just nods back at him, her eyes huge and watery. Aiden responds with a single, awkward nod of his own, an ashamed expression on his face. He looks around the room, finally noticing the considerable amount of onlookers, and lifts his hands in exasperation. “Okay, you can all stop staring now, it’s over.” As usual, Aiden Zimmerman just has a way of getting people to go along with him, because the crowd quickly disperses itself, half-whispered chatters starting to fill the room again along with the music.

Satisfied, Aiden pushes past Jenna and Jesse and walks right up to Dipper, whose gaze shifts to the side awkwardly before it lands back on Aiden. “Shit,” Aiden says under his breath as he takes in the quickly forming bruise on Dipper’s face. “Dipper, I’m really, really sorry about this.”

Dipper shakes his head rapidly, his eyes dropping to the floor.

“Really,” Aiden adds weakly, his shoulders slumped.

“It’s—I—” Dipper’s sentence doesn’t get finished. He just shakes his head some more, sans eye contact.

Aiden sighs tiredly, putting a hand on Dipper’s shoulder, apparently not noticing the way the shorter boy flinches at the contact. Mabel looks on from a few feet away, her heart whirring—it’s gotten real hard to breathe all of a sudden. “Come on, I’ll um, I’ll get you some ice.”

Aiden moves to start to lead Dipper away, and for one unnerving second Mabel expects her brother to dig his dingy old black-n’-white Vans into the floor and refuse to follow—she nearly breathes a loud sigh of relief when Dipper goes along with it, his clothes wet and stained from falling into a table of drinks, his eyes still glued to the floor, a blank look on

his pale face. Aiden walks the two of them past a still-silent Jenna and Jesse without a word. Mabel swallows hard and tries to blink away the tears in her eyes, stiffly following her ex-boyfriend and her brother to the kitchen.

“There,” Aiden finishes wrapping a ziploc bag full of ice in a washcloth and hands it out to Dipper, who slowly reaches out to take it from where he leans against the fancy kitchen island. “Just um... hold that on there as long as you can, and hopefully it won’t swell up too bad.”

Dipper stops himself from voicing the snarky *yeah, no shit*, that reflexively forms in his head and silently does as he’s told, lifting to press the ice against his throbbing eye and cheek. He winces at the contact. Goddammit... he is not going to enjoy explaining this probably-horrible bruise to his mom tomorrow. Especially when he and Mabel are supposed to be “at the drive-in for the Saturday night double feature” right now. People can believably get socked at the drive-in, right?

His thoughts are interrupted by another one of Aiden’s dejected sighs. It’s hard not to frown and roll his eyes. *Oh my god, give it a rest already with the sighs, man. It wasn’t your fault. Mostly.*

“Guys, seriously, I’m...” Aiden rubs his eye, keeping to his spot near the sink as he addresses the twins who stand across from him. “I’m so sorry, about all of that. I hope you know that I... I mean I didn’t put them up to that, or anything. They’re both assholes.”

“S’okay. We know,” Mabel pipes up from her spot next to Dipper, who glances over at her, his head down. She furtively shoots her brother an expectant, pleading look. He says nothing. Then Dipper feels her elbowing him, just barely, so Aiden won’t be able to see.

“Yeah it’s whatever. It’s fine,” Dipper says in a monotone. That’s the best he’s got. Mabel’s elbow digs into his side again, and Dipper groans inwardly. Ah, shit. He’s gotta say it, doesn’t he. Yeah, he does. “Um... thanks, Aiden. For um... yeah.” Dipper gestures awkwardly at his ice-pack-covered eye.

“No, yeah, of course. Honestly, I’m sorry this happened at all.”

Dipper nods slowly again, eyes back on the floor. He’s pretty ashamed at how impossible it feels to look this guy in the eye, but god, it really is. He knows he should be entirely grateful that Aiden stepped in before he could be beaten to a pulp by some meathead idiot. And he is *mostly* grateful, but... man... of course, of *course*, it had to be perfect-looks, perfect-personality, probably-still-has-feelings-for-Mabel, has-done-things-with-Mabel, perfectly perfect *Aiden* to the rescue, like a second after Dipper had utterly bombed at coming to her rescue.

Dammit, why did it always have to be Aiden?

The talking has totally ceased, the sound of conversation from the few other people in the kitchen and the music coming from the next room the only things filling the stuffy air between the three teenagers. There's no missing the thick tension hovering around them.

Aiden is the one to break the maximum awkward silence, with another one of those damn sighs, and then—

"Um... Mabel?"

Mabel's head jerks up from where she's intently playing with her hands. Dipper's head jerks up too, suddenly on edge. Aiden swallows noticeably and continues. "Would it be okay if... if we talked for a second? Like, uh..." Aiden glances vaguely in Dipper's direction for a split-second, scratching the back of his stupid pointy blonde haircut uncomfortably, "...privately, I mean?"

What?! Dipper's hand tightens around the icepack, his bad eye stinging when it tries to widen along with his good one. *Oh hell no. Not a chance, man.*

"Oh, um—" Mabel drags her teeth over her bottom lip, her eyes flicking over to meet Dipper's—*no no no, I'm not okay with that*, he frantically attempts to communicate by raising his eyebrows pleadingly, just the tiniest smidge, hoping she'll pick up on his signal—nope, no dice. Mabel's eyes dash away from his and she looks back to meet Aiden's sky-blue ones, nodding, her voice high and awkward, "Um yeah, sure... okay."

Dipper's mouth falls open a little in shock as he looks back and forth between his sister and her ex-boyfriend. What the hell... haha, oh-ho, thiiiis isn't happening, right? He's pretty sure he's had nightmares that start exactly like this.

"Okay... cool," Aiden says, sounding nervous, but also relieved. He tilts his head down at the tiled kitchen floor before glancing back up at Mabel with a soft look that makes Dipper absolutely *seethe*. "Here, we can just..." he points to the doorway, "...yeah."

Mabel gives Dipper nothing but a drive-by apologetic look and a little shrug of her shoulders as she walks past him, following Aiden out of the kitchen. Dipper can only look on in complete disbelief, following them with his uncovered eye until they're out of sight, headed who-knows-where. When they've been gone for a full ten seconds, he rips the ice pack Aiden made for him off his face, tossing it angrily into the sink, feeling his bruise throb painfully. He slumps down to sit on one of the kitchen stools, back hunched, elbows resting on his knees, his heart dropping far, far down into his gut.

When five minutes pass and Mabel still hasn't reappeared, Dipper hops up from the stool and stomps out of the kitchen, choosing instead to wait by the front door of this ludicrously enormous house, his arms crossed tightly. It's the point in the night where people are starting to get sloppy drunk. Someone bumps against him and sloshes liquid on his arm, but Dipper doesn't even look up. Just keeps staring down at the carpet, barely blinking. There's a harsh, static buzzing in his ears, and it's not just because of the too-loud music.

Twenty-four minutes and some seconds pass before his sister's pink shoes finally appear in his line of vision. *Twenty-four* minutes. He'd checked his phone so many times that he'd timed her without meaning to.

"There you are... Dip?" He slowly looks up to Mabel's face, which looks flushed and timid. "Sorry, you weren't in the kitchen, I couldn't find you."

Dipper tries not to let his voice come out as cold as it wants to be. "Whatever. Can we just get out of here, please?"

Mabel's mouth opens tentatively, but then it snaps closed, and she nods instead. She looks so disappointed and sad, which tugs at his heartstrings... but to be honest, Dipper can't find any words of comfort in himself at the moment.

They make their way back to their old blue minivan in silence. The music of the party behind them becomes fainter and fainter the further away they get. The van beeps twice when Dipper unlocks it with the button on his keys, and he stalks around to the driver's side door, his hands stuffed into the pockets of his damp shorts, while Mabel shuffles her way over to the passenger's side. Both twins settle in their seats and their doors slam shut at the same time, and they buckle their seat belts, still deathly silent. The longer Mabel says nothing, the angrier Dipper can feel himself growing, and his fist trembles the slightest bit as he jams the key in the ignition and turns.

They're only three minutes into the drive home when Dipper cracks.

"So?"

Mabel spits out a lock of her hair, glancing over at him. "So..." Her head shakes once side to side in a perfectly confused manner that only serves to further piss him off.

Dipper clutches the steering wheel a little too hard as he straightens the van back out after a turn. His left cheek and eye throb painfully. "*So*, what were you... what'd Aiden need to talk to you about so badly?"

Mabel shrugs, leaning her head on her hand as she stares out the window. "He was just... double-checking that I was okay."

"Okay..." Dipper swallows, speaking slowly, "well, you were gone for a long time."

"Not really," is all Mabel says, now picking at a loose thread on her tights. She sounds pretty damn sober by this point, and weirdly quiet. A stark contrast to the giggly, hiccup-y version of herself that couldn't keep her hands off him earlier that same night. Dipper rips his eyes off the road to give her an incredulous, raised-eyebrows look, and Mabel shoots one right back at him. "*What*, Dipper? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"What'd he want?"

"He didn't *want* anything. We just talked for a little bit, that's all."

She's back to not looking at him, which makes Dipper an unexplainable amount of uneasy. He scowls, barely able to believe the way this conversation is going. "That's *all* you're gonna say?"

"Um, yeah?" Mabel retorts weakly, her shoulders shrugging. "It was nothing weird or anything. Please, I just, I really don't wanna talk about it." Dipper feels his eyes grow wider with disbelief at yet *another* non-answer. He ignores the pain that sweeps through the left side of his face at the action. She's... she's got to be kidding, right? Why is she being like this?

"Seriously? You're seriously not going to tell me anything about what you guys were talking about." If that sounded entitled, he doesn't give a fuck.

"Ugh, I dunno! There's not much to say. He was just making sure I was alright, mostly." Mabel shifts uncomfortably in her seat, and Dipper very much notices that. His heart races faster and faster, his shoulders growing more and more tense. "But I mean... well, yeah, he's still sorta lookin' for answers I can't give him, so we were talking a little about that, and I guess I can't really blame him, you know?"

Annnnd there it is. Images of his worst fears, the ones that wouldn't leave him alone no matter what he did the entire time she was gone, start to creep back into his head. Dipper sort of feels like he could yell, but snorts out a harsh, cynical sound instead. "Oh yeah, poor, *pooor* Aiden."

Mabel's face wilts further. "Hey now, he saved both our butts today in case you already forgot! Aiden's a good person! Quit treating him like he's your mortal enemy or whatever, I mean, jeez!" Dipper glares daggers at the road ahead, loathing her words and fighting against the nagging inkling of truth to them with every fiber of his being. He's in too deep, man. Mabel turns to look out the window, resting her forehead against the glass. "And... a-and he's still hurting, okay? And I still feel *horrible* about that, and... I mean, *you* of all people should know what that's like, so just—just lay off the guy already, will ya?"

Dipper feels something in his chest constrict dangerously. "Yeah, Mabel, you're right! I *do* fucking know what that's like! So you'll forgive me if I'm not very supportive of you ditching me to go off and have long-ass intimate conversations and whatnot with your ex!"

Mabel's head jerks to look at him fiercely over her shoulder. "And whatnot? Whuh'do you mean and *whatnot*, what in the heck's that supposed to mean?"

A voice at the very back of his brain begs, *screams* for him not to say it, but Mabel has been acting weird and avoiding his eyes for too long and he's a ridiculous amount of angry and scared right now for reasons too stupid and embarrassing to admit, so the faraway voice gets ignored. "I don't know, you tell me! How 'bout you stop blatantly dancing around the subject and just fucking *tell* me, Mabel!"

"Oh my god, Dipper are you *serious* right now!" Mabel spins fully in her seat to stare him down with wild eyes and throw her hands in the air, her voice severely tight. "*Nothing* happened! We talked for like, ten minutes! I didn't tell him jack, obviously! And I certainly

didn't friggin' *cheat* on you, if that's what you're implying, you... you *jerk!*" Tears fill her voice and Dipper's heart drops into his butt and god, he doesn't expect her to keep yelling, but she does. "I'm with *you*, okay, you have me! Congratu-friggin-lations! Ya got the girl! S-so you can stop being a huge ass *a-anytime* now!"

Mabel abruptly turns back around in her seat to press her forehead against the passenger side window and hide behind her hair, her shoulders trembling. Dipper swallows so hard that his throat hurts. She's never cursed at him before, is all he can think for some reason. His heart beats fast and high in his chest, a deep frown cutting through his face as he frantically tries to think of something to say to that, something that will justify the quickly dwindling anger and irrational amount of hurt he's still feeling. But he comes up empty. Even though some soft indie-rock song plays on the radio, the van seems to stew in a choking silence anyway.

Staring down the road in front of him, knuckles white from gripping the steering wheel, Dipper hears Mabel sniff loudly. His silent breathing picks up speed as he slows to a stop at a red light, listening to his sister snuffle and cry as quietly as she can. He knows he just fucked up badly... that's starting to really sink in, now. He knows this is his cue to say something. But it sort of feels like he's having an out of body experience at the moment. There's a lump in his throat and Dipper really doesn't trust his voice (or his thoughts, for that matter) right now.

So the rest of the drive home is silent.

Later that night, Dipper lays in bed above the covers on his back, his phone clutched in between his sweaty hands. His hair is still damp against his pillow; the sticky drink mess all over his clothes and skin forced him to make a beeline to the bathroom for a shower when they got home. He hasn't seen Mabel since then either, who marched silently up to her room a few steps ahead of him and shut the door behind her. He caught the click of her lock right after that.

He erases another overly long apology text, his thumb spazzing over the delete button. It didn't feel right, just like none of the others did. The anger has worn down enough for the crippling amounts of guilt to set in. Her words have sunk down under his skin, making it hard to lay still. His heart palpitates painfully, and the lame over-dramatic romantic in him wants to say that it hurts worse than the throbbing from the bruise near his eye. The image of Mabel's shoulders shaking as she curled herself against the passenger side door, away from him, is branded on the backs of his eyelids, the sound of her miserable sniffs and escaped whimpers on repeat in his ears.

Fuck, fuck, fuck...

He wants to tell her how sorry he is to her face, but he knows that if he were to tiptoe down the hall and quietly knock on her door right now, it wouldn't open for him. This is the biggest fight they've had in a long time, even since before they were a couple (well...

not counting that whole miserable-silent-awkward era that took over their lives for weeks, right up until they got together). Dipper sighs, willing himself to calm down. Yet another new message gets tapped out. He makes an effort to keep it simple this time. Wetting his dry lips, he jams his thumb down on the send button.

Mabel, you awake?

I'm sorry, Mabels

I'm so, so sorry for what I said

I'd really like to come over and talk,
if that's okay?

Dipper stares at the screen for a few minutes, waiting. His phone eventually goes dark. He takes a deep breath, laying back into his pillow, his hand and phone resting on his belly. Fifteen more minutes of nothing pass before he breaks down and jerks up into sitting position. Rolling out of bed, he tiptoes over and cracks his door open. For what feels like the hundredth time that night, he peeks out into the upstairs hallway to see if there was still light shining out from under his sister's bedroom door... there is. Dipper pulls his door closed again, his shoulders sagging. He pads his way back over to his bed, the mattress creaking loudly as he plops himself down on the edge of it. His phone gets swiped back open.

Mabels?

I know you're awake... your light's
still on

Please just hear me out?

I'm really, really sorry

I was an idiot

Dipper's heart leaps and he breathes a small noise of relief when finally, *finally* those three text-in-progress dots appear.

Yah, ya were :\

the biggest, dumbest idiot ever.

Is it okay if I come over? I really want to do this in person

well i dont super wanna see u right now, so

too bad

I guess I deserve that.

I mean, I know I do

i dont wanna talk to u rn either so quit texting me and go to bed. goodnight

Mabel please, I'm so sorry

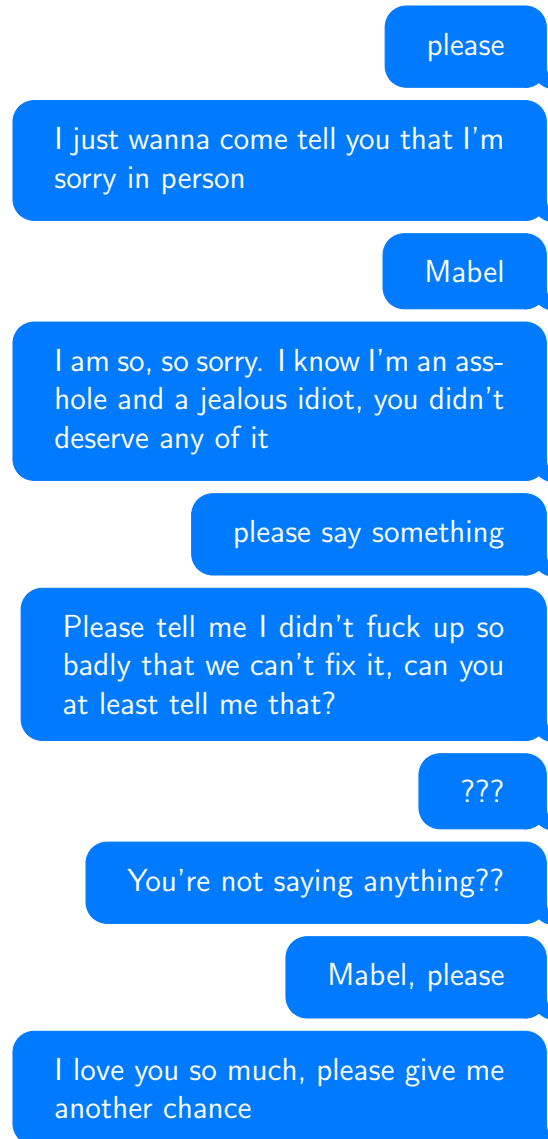
please don't shut me out, I just want to fix this

She doesn't respond. The minutes tick by... five, ten, twenty minutes. As more and more time passes Dipper starts to feel increasingly sick to his stomach. Mabel has never blatantly ignored him or shot down his sincere apologies like this before. Like... what is he supposed to do now, to make things right? What's the protocol here? His mind whirs faster and faster, at a loss. He's got zero past girlfriend fight examples to fall back on for help, due to the fact that he's never *had* a lasting-longer-than-a-week girlfriend before this, and there's also that game-changing fact that his first girlfriend turned out to be... well, his sister.

Fuck. There is no protocol for this, is there. And Mabel doesn't seem to even *want* to fix this. She seems so done with him.

Oh god... what did he do? What could she be thinking right now?

When his panicking dick of a brain responds to that question with *the worst* possible answers, his eyes start to prickle, and Dipper starts to get truly desperate. His numb fingers break every texting etiquette rule there is, piling on message after message the longer Mabel stays silent.



Dipper stares down his phone, the tiny glowing screen the only thing in the room shining light on the nervous wreck he's become. He knows he's probably coming off pathetic but he doesn't really care at this point, if she breaks it off it's not gonna matter anyway—oh shit, she's finally writing back—

ghhhhhhhh omg dipper. im not about to break up w/ u so calm urself

im just mad at you cos u were acting like a huge piece of doodoo earlier!! we re just havin our first fight man?? like im allowed to be mad @ u??

im allowed to want space and not wanna talk 2 u for a little bit and i should be able to do that without getting 80 majillion freak out texts in a row???

like u rlly think i'd dump u over something like this?? what the heck

No... I didn't mean to sound like I was accusing you

god I'm fucking this up reall y badly I know that... please can we just talk this out :(

uughhhhhhhasfdafdfhja ---

fine

u can come talk. get your sweaty butt over here

ghhhhhhhh

The second he receives her message the phone drops from his hands, and Dipper peels out of bed and down the hall as silently as he can, coming to an abrupt stop in front of Mabel's door. He hesitates there for a few seconds, his fingers twitching just out of reach of

the doorknob. He gives the door to his parents' darkened bedroom at the opposite end of the hallway one last nervous glance before he forces himself to grab onto the knob and turn, edging the door open just far enough to poke his head in.

His twin sits cross-legged on the edge of her stuffed-animal-covered bed, wearing the giant t-shirt that's her current favorite to use as pajamas, swaddled in her pig blanket... avoiding his eyes. Her face looks very drained. She looks towards the window and motions halfheartedly for Dipper to come in. He obeys, closing and re-locking the door behind him, shuffling over to sit next to her. Close, but not too close. He isn't out to push his luck, here.

There's a semi-awkward silence before Mabel shrugs in her blanket cocoon, peering over at him with a hello-any-day-now face. "Okay... I'm hearing you out, so go ahead."

Dipper exhales heavily and looks over at her, his eyes brimming with fear and regret. "I'm so, so sorry, Mabels. For how I handled myself, for—for everything I said, for... um, pushing you earlier, too... that wasn't... that was really shitty of me." His ears promptly turn red. "You were right, I was being an insecure asshole about..." he winces and drops his eyes to his lap, rubbing the back of his neck, "your ex and, a-and... about us..."

"Yeah. No shiz," Mabel lets her blanket fall away, folding her arms and glaring at her striped socked feet.

Her tone makes Dipper's chest ache with dread. She's still so clearly pissed at him... he forces himself to push forward. "I had no right to accuse you of anything, *none*, and... I mean I knew nothing happened, like, I-I *knew* that, I just—" He shakes his head, wondering how the hell he's going to put this. "Sometimes I... I get so freaked out and—so fucking bogged *down* under my own stupid thought spirals and then, suddenly all these old insecurities will dredge themselves up and... I end up doing irrational shit like—like yelling at my girlfriend when she didn't do anything, *ugh*, god..." He digs his fingers into his eyes, groaning with humiliation as his brain perfectly recalls what he yelled to her in the car. "I'm sorry," he finishes pitifully.

Mabel's frown eases up, but only a little bit. She speaks carefully, staring exclusively at the carpet a few feet in front of her. "Dipper... like, you realize how your massive amount of insecurities comes across to *me*, right?"

"I know," he croaks, hanging his head.

"Do you? Well bro, I'm gonna tell you anyway. 'Cuz this isn't the first time this sorta thing has happened." Mabel concentrates hard on keeping her voice steady even though it wants to shake and crack, her fingers playing with the ends of her hair. "It feels like you don't trust me." At that she can see Dipper flinch in her peripherals, but Mabel keeps going. "Like deep down, you don't think I believe in this relationship as much as you do, or something. Like you think I'm gonna throw in the towel first chance I get. Or *cheat* on you, a-apparently." Her face scrunches up a little, her eyes growing moist. "Do you know how *crappy* that makes me feel?"

"I know," Dipper whispers, wilting further to rest his forehead in his hands. "You're right, I'm so sorry, please forgive me."

She whines at how defeated he looks, hunched over with his head in his hands, and lets her head flop back towards the ceiling in exasperation. "See, you're doin' it even now, you look and talk like you're expecting me to dump you flat any second!" Mabel sighs. After a few seconds of silent indecision, she tiredly scoots closer to her brother on the bed, finally having mercy by putting her arm around his shoulders. "Jeez, Dipper, like I... I am *not* gonna do that, okay? I mean..." a helpless noise croaks from her throat, "legit question here, bro... what the heck can I do to convince you once and for all that I want this just as much as you do? That I'm not goin' anywhere? 'Cuz... I guess nothing's worked so far."

He looks over at her in surprise, his reddened eyes wide and scared, clearly caught off guard by the question. "I, I don't..."

"—Because if you can't even trust me when I tell you that I love you, then I... I'm not sure what we're even..." She trails off, biting her lip hard and looking away from him. Dipper jolts up straight and shakes his head frantically at where she seems to be going with this, grabbing her hand in his.

"No! No, Mabel, I *do* trust you. I trust you more than anyone in the world, it's just, I, I g..." His large brown eyes dart to their joined hands, his mouth twitching half open and closed as he searches for the right words. He looks so lost, it breaks her heart. "I don't know, I... some days all of this still feels way too good to be real. Like... I'm gonna wake up any second and lose it all again, I don't know. God, it... it makes me crazy. And stupid." He licks his dry lips, still staring down at their hands. "I spent a while thinking I'd lost you for good and just kinda wallowing around in those feelings and... a-and old habits die hard, I guess? But none of those fears are on you, Mabel. I'm just... an idiot. I-I *know*, I know I've got way too many insecurities about your ex and about you and I guess, about myself, too..." he sighs, "I didn't realize until today that they were affecting you that badly. I'm so, so sorry that I hurt you. And I'm gonna work on fixing myself, okay? I promise."

Mabel squeezes his hand. "Dip," she whines sadly. Now's she's the one at a loss for words, her heart going out to her brother... he sure does deal with a lot of jank that likes to jankity-jank up his head, like, twenty-four-seven.

"I really am, Mabel. I swear, I'm gonna chill the fuck out. I'll... I'll keep myself in check. Somehow. Just... try and be more aware of the irrational shit feelings when they pop up so they don't... you know. Get taken out on you."

"Is that even something that's... I dunno, doable?" The question comes out before she can stop it, her voice sounding entirely unsure.

"Yeah... yeah, it is. Damn, if it's not, I'll *make* it doable." Dipper's voice is low, gravelly and sincere. He brings their joined hands up to his mouth and gently kisses her knuckles. The depth of the love shining in his eyes, even with a big purple-y bruise around

one of them, feels like it's socking her right in the stomach, knocking the wind out of her, throwing her all off-kilter. Just like it did the first time he looked at her like this. "I'd do anything for you, Mabel."

Oh...

Oof. Dipper looking at her like that and saying things like that sends a rush through her whole body, makes her mouth dry up and her cheeks go aflame. Mabel can feel herself letting go of her formerly tight grip on the problems they might have, how mad at him she's supposed to be. Man... Dipper is always willing to do so much for her. He always has been, long before the romance-y stuff started. So many times has he dropped everything for her, taken all the blame for her, and now, he wants to straight up change the way his brain thinks thoughts for her?

Her former anger floats away, and guilt starts to trickle into her heart, replacing it.

Aw, crud... today was hard, and looking back on it, she didn't exactly make it any easier. The least she can do is meet him halfway.

Mabel reaches out to cup her brother's scratchy jaw in her hands, and he immediately leans into the touch.

"Oh, Dip... dangit, I don't want you to have to feel gross or insecure about anything at all, ever," Mabel whispers, letting her thumb brush over his bottom lip. "You're not crazy, or stupid. The whole closet sitch, I mean... I *should've* stopped when you asked me to stop. That was a super uncool thing to do..." She sighs, squeezing her eyes closed for a second. "And I'm sorry about leaving you and goin' off with Aiden, and then being all vague in the car, and I'm sorry it took me this long to say sorry... I was still all caught up in the bad-janky feels from the—the stuff Jenna and Jesse said, and... I wasn't thinking about how much any of it might be affecting you. Ugh, dang it, that... that was really lame of me. You really had my back earlier, I never thanked you for that and I—" She shakes her head sadly. "Yikes, I could've done a lot better today, too, Dipper."

Dipper's face goes all concerned-brother and he tries to cut in, "Mabel, none of the shit those jerks said is—"

"No I know, I know it's not," Mabel shushes him gently, leaning her forehead against his. "I don't really wanna talk about that dumbness right now. I'm just tryna say that—that we could *both* be doing better at the boyfriend-girlfriend thing, I guess. But, like, being better isn't an ultimatum or anything, ya dig? We'll... we'll help each other get better at this. 'Cuz *this* is so super worth it." She strokes his cheeks with her thumbs. Dipper's mouth curves into a tiny, grateful smile.

"Yeah, agreed," he whispers earnestly. Mabel smiles back at him.

"So... you don't have to worry about kickin' the bad cray-cray thoughts all by yourself, 'kay? I *love* you, dork. I can tell you that as many times as you need me to." Dipper's breath hitches. His eyes, shimmering with appreciation and relief, finally drift closed and he

leans forward to try and close the gap between them, but Mabel pulls back an inch before he can kiss her. His eyes blink back open, searching hers a little worriedly. Her pointer finger taps the very tip his nose. “Also. Just so you’re aware, I *am* still a lil’ bit peeved at you,” she adds, juuust to keep him on his toes, “but you betta’ *believe* I am gonna make out with you anyway.”

He starts to say something in response but the words are muffled by Mabel darting forward and squashing her lips against his. Whatever he had to say must not’ve been that important as Dipper instantly pours himself into the kiss, his head tilting and his arms coming around her, riling up a swarm of butterflies in her gut. He’s always so quick to respond to her, this time being no different.

Mabel grips hard on the collar of Dipper’s nerdy pi tee that he bought on a class trip to the Exploratorium, laying back into her bed and pulling him down on top of her without breaking their kiss. Dipper hustles to brace his arms on either side of her head so he doesn’t smush her, adjusting his position so he’s hovering over her on his knees and elbows. Mabel wraps her arms around his torso, dragging her nails up and down the length of his back. A shiver overtakes him, and he deepens the kiss with a rasping groan. The wet, breathy noise Dipper makes when he thrusts his tongue into her mouth makes her blood pump faster, the warm tingling between her legs quickly progressing to throbbing.

Ohh, jeez, yeah, she wants... she *needs* to feel him, really really badly, uhm, *right* now. Mabel hurriedly slides her hands down to his butt, pressing him with her palms and coaxing his body down until their hips are flush together. Warmth explodes inside her as she gets exactly what she wants, feeling him twitch and harden where he’s sandwiched between them. *Guh*, it feels good. It’s just so dang *good* to be with him right now, like this, quiet and alone together and free to get all wrapped up in each other after all the earlier horribleness of the day.

“Dipperrr,” Mabel moans softly when she pulls away from his lips for a quick second, perfectly aware of how needy she sounds. Dipper seems to be aware of it too, since he quickly grows as hard as he’s ever gonna get against her tummy. He ends their liplock with a little *smack*, pulling back to look down at her with cloudy eyes, so heart-poundingly full of longing. The eye contact causes her to breathe out another whine, and she presses up to rub herself against him, her eyes turning pleading. “Diiip, pleeease,” she murmurs, her brows arched into a helpless look.

Dipper shudders hard, whispering out a jittery “*Fuck*,” his breath coming out choppy and his cheeks growing much pinker. His eyelids flicker but he doesn’t look away. One corner of his mouth tugs up into what she recognizes as his signature ‘*don’t worry, I’ve got you*’ face, which only makes her whine for him again.

Dipper lifts his hips away from hers and sits up before Mabel can protest, just enough to take her wrists from around his back and pin them back down to her pink and green bedspread. *Wuh-woah*. The itty-bitty display of dominance knocks the air from Mabel’s lungs, stupefying her; um, she is *very* much into Dominant-Dip (although D-D doesn’t yet make regular appearances during bed-activities, so she’s gotta live it up when he does).

Dipper bends to kiss her, and oh boy, it is *some* kiss indeed. His lips move with that super-fired-up passion that's sort of hard to keep pace with, but she is lovin' it anyway, her body squirming happily beneath his.

He tears his mouth from hers with a gasp, gazing down at her again through his long lashes and rich, dark brown eyes. Shoooooot, for some reason the bruise on his face is really upping Dipper's rugged-hotness factor right now, what the heck, bruise. Mabel's heart thumps loudly in her ears, wrists still pinned on either side of her head. She's still not sure where this supes-intense make out is headed, but man is she eager to find out. The heated, (ridiculously) sexually-charged pause comes to a sudden end, and Dipper's lips are back on the move, landing on her cheek, her jaw, her earlobe, wasting no time.

"Mm, fuck, I love you," she hears him breathe as he hurriedly kisses down her neck, "I love you so much." Mabel responds to his whispered declaration with a breathy, frantic sound as Dipper brushes his lips along her collarbone, blazes a trail of kisses down her chest and breasts and belly, pushing up her oversized shirt in the process, nuzzling and caressing her skin with his hands and mouth all the way down. Holy wow, he is a dude on a mission, barely stopping to breathe, it feels like. He moves lower and lower until he's all the way between her legs, and Mabel is now very aware of where this is going, her body throbbing and twitchy with anticipation. He drags his lips away from her inner thigh to sit up suddenly and hook his restless fingers into the elastic band of her polka-dotted panties.

Dip pauses to meet her eyes and raises his eyebrows slightly, breathing hard, still in the habit of needing her permission for everything. Mabel bites her lip and nods, her gaze jumping from the open desire on his face to the tent in his boxers and back again before she lays back into the bed and lifts her hips, allowing her brother to easily drag her underwear down her legs. She feels his hands, warm and gentle, push her legs apart a bit further. Mabel's eyebrows furrow over her closed eyes and she whines softly, quite embarrassingly aware of how wet she's become in such a short period of time. She hears the bed creak as Dipper gingerly moves to lay on his stomach. Only seconds pass before she feels hot, ragged breathing hitting her, just centimeters away—her hips jerk a little at the sensation. A soft, open mouthed kiss gets pressed against her labia, just enough pressure to elicit a tiny gasp. After a few more slow, longing kisses she hears him moan under his breath before his whole tongue darts out to lick her up and down with long, bold stripes, his arms curling possessively around her thighs. She can feel the faint prickle of his facial hair pressing into her as he pulls her closer to his face.

Dear sah-weet Jaysus. Mabel's breathing quickly becomes labored, the sound of it joining the nonstop wet-eating noises in filling the silence of her bedroom. Her toes clench. Blearily, she opens her eyes and lifts her head a bit to see Dipper's adorable brown mop of hair down between her legs, his eyes closed, his face crimson, his nose shamelessly smooshed against her down-there-hair and his jaw and mouth moving on her with unabashed passion—

Oh, holy shiiiiii... the sight makes her stomach flip, her body tingling all over. His tongue slithers up to gently circle and caress her clit without pressing too hard on it directly (oh joyous day he's only done this two other times but he's learned, he's *learned*), and *that*

gets Mabel to snatch up her little pig pillow and mush it down over her face so she can safely let out the long, squeaky whimper she *cannot* hold in anymore. The decorative pillow falls off to the side as her head rolls back, one of her hands moving down to rake lovingly through his thick curls. The sighs and high-pitched noises start to pour out of her, some words too, because jeez, the *way* he's goin' at her like he's friggin' starving or something, barely even coming up for air, makin' those muffled, breathy sounds that vibrate into her very core, his arms tugging her closer, *closer*. . . g-god, he's so. . . he's *so*. . .

"*Mmmh*, ohgod, Dipper!"

As she whisper-wails his name as quietly as she possibly can, her hands jump from his hair to where his hands stroke along her thighs, gripping onto his fingers. He sighs against her slickened skin—a faraway, dreamy sound—and sweetly adjusts their grip to hold her hands properly, weaving his fingers between hers and holding tight. He pulls back an inch to gasp in a breath or two before he ducks back down and switches techniques, now tending exclusively to her clit, his lips and tongue picking up speed. Mabel bites back another loud moan. She squirms on the bed, tossing her head to the side and squeezing her eyes shut, her legs starting to tremble. Her hips start moving without her meaning to, because even though he's only been at this a few minutes she's already so *close* and getting super antsy. She realizes she likes this better, her moving on him, and doesn't stop. She finds an angle that turns her body to shuddering jelly-goo, her hands wriggling out of his and flying back into his hair to both hold him in position and steady herself as she bucks her hips. Dipper catches on fast, dutifully keeping his head as still as he can while his tongue stays moving with quick, precise little strokes.

"*Hahhh*—right there right there ohgodpleasepleaseplease—"

Her head tosses again, the tension in her body stacking to maddening levels. When she scoots herself down to desperately rub herself more fully against his face, Dipper lets out a gruff moan, his hands drifting up to cup her breasts. The tingly jolt she gets from him squeezing her causes a pleased giggle to bubble out of her, and Mabel cracks open her eyes to gaze down at her bro for the first time in a while. Her mouth falls wide open in a silent moan a second later, her face scrunching up, because woah-there-wowee, Dipper looks so. . . *gone*. His eyes closed contentedly, eyebrows knitted together in a way that makes him look blissfully desperate, the color of his face gone full-tomato. His forehead is so sweaty that his bangs are damp, but not as damp as, well, the entire bottom half of his face, she can see from the way it glistens from the tip of his pink nose on down—ooohwhee-dawgy, talk about dedication—like the other two times were real good but they were *not* like this. . .

She can feel the tingling heat of pressure on the verge of cresting as she rolls her hips faster, shamelessly continuing to watch her brother through glazed-over eyes. Ohh gosh, the sight of him allowing her to grind so mercilessly against his beet red face, and, and the thought of him getting *that* much pleasure from being practically smothered via Mabel-crotch, the feel of his fluttering tongue that *has* to be getting pretty dang tired by now—

“*Dipper*,” Mabel gasps, fighting hard to keep quiet. Her hips firmly roll up against his mouth one last time before she feels her walls suddenly start to clench and unclench, so many times that her spasming body attempts to curl in on itself, her eyes squeezing shut, her legs snapping closed, her hands constricting into fists full of his hair. She stutters out a hushed cry, willing herself to relax the vice grip on her brother’s head as soon as she’s physically capable. Once her limbs unlock she goes limp, thighs still twitching here and there from tiny aftershocks that make her shiver.

There’s a loud buzzing in her ears as she gradually floats back to herself. Mabel’s eyes open halfway and she’s greeted with the spine-tingling image of Dipper still nuzzled down in the crevice of her thighs, his shoulders heaving as he gets used to taking in a normal amount of air again. His heavy breaths wash over her sensitive skin, pink tongue poking just barely out of his mouth to give her soft, doting licks, like a lil’ kitten at a milk bowl. Man, aside from that one jerk and tiny grunt-yelp from her sudden yank on his hair, Dipper has totally stayed put through the impromptu headlock, even with that colorful bruise on his face... what a flippin’ champ.

His eyes peel open, dark brown irises and dilated pupils flitting up to lock onto hers. Mabel gives him a lazy grin, her lips parted as she tries to catch her breath. Dipper beams back at her, his eyes half-lidded. He leans in to press one last sweet kiss to her clit before he moves to rest his cheek against her parted leg, totally indifferent to the way his drenched face smears on her skin. After a moment he decides to press a small peck to her cushy inner thigh, too. Her cheeks warm as she observes the tender gesture. His hands reach out to grasp her slack ones where they lay on the bed; his are warm and a little sweaty, just the way she likes them.

Mabel jokingly lifts an eyebrow at him, her voice coming out spent and croaky. “W-what, you think a little... dedicated kitty-cat-nommin’ is gonna get you the rest of the way out of the doghouse, mister?”

“No,” Dipper laughs breathily, halfway hiding his face against her leg and peeking at her sheepishly. “That was just ‘cuz I wanted to.”

“Mhm, *sure*...” She fixes on him with a mock-suspicious look. “I’m onto you, man.”

“I mean, I did figure it couldn’t *hurt*,” he admits with a shrug and a grin, before the grin fades a little and his eyes soften. “But I know I got a little ways to go, earning your forgiveness wise.”

She wriggles one of her hands free to wave it around in a pretend blessing of his forehead, utilizing her wise-old-friar voice. “Oh you are fah, *fahhh* along the blessed path to forgiveness, my child.”

He kisses her thigh again. “That’s all I ask.”

She reaches her arms out to him with grabby hands. “*Weh*. Come cuddle me, already.”

Dipper smiles, wiping his face on his sleeve as he hauls himself up to her side, while Mabel pushes her shirt back down and makes a spot for him, and they tangle themselves up in each other's grasps, facing each other on their sides. She reaches up to gently run her fingers over the purpling bruise between his left eye and cheek, pursing her lips to one side, trying not to betray the prick of sadness the sight of it gives her.

"Hm... maybe we can tell Mom and Dad you got into a brawl with a dude at the drive-in who was... trying to steal my Junior Mints. Yeah. Just your classic Dips, heroically defending my snack honor. To the death. Totally believable!"

"Right, that is just *so* classic me," Dipper says with a little snort and eye roll.

Mabel lets her fingers trickle down his cheek, her face softening. "Hey, but seriously Dipper... thanks for being there earlier, when I needed you. I can't remember if I told you that yet." Dipper gives her a tender look, quirking his lips into a half-smile that tells her there's no need to say anything more than that, if she doesn't want to. Mabel runs her thumb over the soft, still-damp hair on his chin, before taking his whole chin between her thumb and forefinger and barely turning his head side to side. "You're the bestest brother-bee-eff. For reals. All the awards go to you." He shakes with a few silent laughs, bats her hand away from his face, then reaches to affectionately tuck her flyaways behind her ear. Mabel sighs, bursting at the seams with love and appreciation for her sibling, snuggling closer to him. "... Is it hurting you lots, though?"

"Nah, it's not too bad... better now," Dipper says softly, craning his neck a smidge to press a kiss to her forehead. "Thanks for letting me come over, Mabel."

"Hey, I sure am dang glad I did. I mean, definitely for the making-up and the meaningful relationship progression, thaz good stuff, but also, *dude*. That second part, *whoo-whew-whew*," she fans herself and bats her eyelashes at him, making Dipper giggle, "that's all I got to say about that."

"Yeah, I could kinda tell you were uh... diggin' it." Dipper puts on a flagrant display of the *dorkiest* of eyebrow wiggles, so stupidly dorky-n'-cute that Mabel has to snort and push on his shoulder. "Man," Dipper continues, "I gotta say though, I..." he squints off into space and grins ear to ear, "really, *really* like giving you head."

Mabel can feel the heat blooming in her cheeks as she giggles and closes her eyes. "Yeah, well. You won't ever catch me complaining about that one." She yawns, finally deciding to address the subject of what's pressed up against her thigh and twitches practically every time she moves in the slightest bit.

"Sooo were you just not gonna say anything about this? Hmm?" She rubs pointedly against him with her leg, smiling as she watches his eyes drift closed in bliss. She stops, and they flutter right back open. Dipper gives her a guilty grin.

"Um... no?" He shrugs. "I mean if you're tired, no worries."

"Awww. You're supes-sweet. But I'm not gonna leave you hanging, bro."

“You’re not?” he asks playfully, although she can hear that sweet, quiet hopefulness in his voice, see it on his face, too. It’s the stuff that makes her want to do this for him even though she *is* pretty exhausted.

“Mm-mm, nope. Eh, not today, at least,” Mabel laughs, tapping his nose twice. “Buh-boop.”

Dipper gives her a smile that flashes half his teeth. “Heyy, I’ll take it.”

With both of them giggling softly, she scoots to make a bit of space between their hips, letting her hand drift in loop-de-loops down the front of his shirt until she’s impishly walking her fingers down the length of him through his underwear. Dipper hums out a pleased, grateful sound, relaxing fully against her and her pink cat-face pillow.

Mabel props herself up on one elbow to lightly, just barely brush her lips over his bruise, then press a firmer kiss to his temple, then lean over his ear and murmur, “By the by, broski, it might not be happening tonight, buuut I’m *definitely* planning on finishing what I started in that closet. Definitely, duh-definitely. Ruh-real soon-like. Ya dig, bro-friend?” Dipper, whose eyes are closed, breathes out hard at the words before shuddering out another small giggle, happily nodding his head.

Entirely satisfied with his reaction, with her teeth digging into her bottom lip as she bites back a bit of her crazy-huge smile, Mabel proceeds to guide him out of the slit in his boxers and swiftly turn her brother to jelly in her arms.

Part II

Recursive Fanfic

Dreamboy AU

Dipper is pretty sure the thing he hates most about Mabel's new boyfriend is that there is no good reason to hate him.

Sure, he was dating his sister, which was a not-so-good reason. But even then, brothers were supposed to hate their sisters boyfriends in the you're-a-total-douche-to-my-sister-and-or-me-and-consequently-I-dislike-you-based-on-your-douchey-actions, not in a you're-totally-sweet-on-my-sister-and-you-make-her-laugh-and-smile-and-you're-always-hanging-out-with-her-and-I-guess-I'm-sort-of-jealous-of-all-the-time-you-spend-with-her-and-oH-MY-GOD-GET-YOUR-HAND-OFF-HER-WAIST sort of way, which was an uncomfortable enough thought process for him to have, let alone admit out loud.

But here Mabel was, in his room with her hands on her hips and an angry pout on her lips (which were shining with freshly applied lipgloss that Dipper couldn't help notice smelt like fresh strawberries and was very distracting and not helping the situation, like, at all.) demanding to know why he didn't want to watch Pitch Perfect with her and Aiden tonight.

"What's your *problem*, Dipper? Aiden's a great guy, and you never hang out with us!"

Dipper inwardly sighs. He turns a page of the book he's looking at, even though he hadn't even started to read the pages he had had open.

"I hung out with you guys last time you watched a movie."

"Yeah but you left like, halfway through! And besides that was like, two weeks ago. That's ages!"

It didn't feel like ages to him. The image of Aiden's hand creeping up his sisters leg flashes in his memory. His heart beats faster and he buries his face further into his book, hoping she didn't catch him clench his teeth. It still made him angry. *Too* angry. Did that really happen two weeks ago? There was no protective brother logic in this. Not even protective twin brother.

“Come on Dipstick!” Mabel veers away from the angry route, switching to bubbly-mode and skipping over to sit on his bed. Nooo, Mabel, don’t do that. Don’t sit on the bed like Dream Mabel does. Dipper clenched his fists as she leant closer to him until she was practically on top of him, wacky grin plastered over her face. She continues to grin at him as she reaches out and wacks his hat gently so it falls down over his face. “It’ll be fuuuuun!”

The hat fell down just enough to hide the ridiculously conspicuous blush that had sprung up on his face and Dipper shifts back sharply, trying to get more space between them. No. No, no, no. Not here, not now. It’s weird, you’re weird, *stop being weird, Dipper*. But the blush remained. His options were to hope she didn’t notice (she would. Mabel always did.) or to make off like it was angry, which, considering how annoyed he was at himself at the moment, let alone Mabel, didn’t seem like too hard a thing to do.

“Mabel!” Dipper says, finally giving up on his pretty weak pretence of reading his book, grabbing the front of his cap and righting it so he could see her properly. “I’m your brother! Why do you want me hanging out with you and your boyfriend anyway?”

“Because I want you two to be friends, Dipper! Is it that crazy for me to want my twin brother and my boyfriend to get along?”

It wasn’t crazy, but Dipper wished it was. He rolls his eyes at her, which he knows is totally childish.

Mabel’s mouth scrunches up. “What’s your problem with Aiden, anyway?”

“I don’t have a problem with him! No one has a problem with him! The guy is perfect, okay?”

He regrets raising his voice immediately but not enough to apologise right away. Mabel’s lip wobbles but Dipper looks away and picks up his book again, face hot. He couldn’t even figure out why the guy bothered him so much himself, so what exactly did Mabel expect to hear from him? He’s pretty sure she doesn’t want to hear about any of his weird thought processes regarding waist-holding and time-spending.

It wasn’t like he hadn’t tried to find a valid reason to be on the hating-Aiden bandwagon. In the first month of them dating he’d spent an unhealthy amount of time trawling through old facebook posts and yearbooks trying to dig up some dirt. But no. Nada. (Unless you count that time when Aiden threw up on some girl’s back at school when he was eight. Which Dipper did not.)

The guy was perfect. Like, literally. Aiden wasn’t a genius or anything but he had a pretty good GPA. It wasn’t *Dipper* good, but that’s probably because the guy also managed to have a life outside study. The guy juggles, paints sets for drama club, is president of the Italian club (‘the language of lurrve’ apparently.), and is on the football team—but he’s wasn’t even one of those douchebags on the football team, no, he’s one of the dude-bros who always high-fiving kids at games and telling off his teammates when they’ve been ‘uncool, man’. Dipper is pretty sure Aiden skipped that awkward adolescent phase most guys go through, going straight from cute kid to fully pubescent teen, complete with winning smile,

six-pack, and a metabolism that made hamburgers melt off his torso without so much as a howdy-do. No such luck for Dipper, who still has what his mom describes as ‘baby-fat’ in his cheeks and something that was definitely not ‘baby-fat’ slowly but surely collecting on his lower belly. And... Aiden was genuinely a great guy, like, goofy and funny and sincere and never had a bad word to say about anyone. Not even Dipper, who had made it is personal goal to be the biggest butt he could possibly be to the guy.

He hears a sniff in front of him and he looks up as Mabel who’s staring at the floor. Oh god. Was she crying? He hadn’t made her cry, had he?

She turns her face towards him, mouth still pouted and angry, though her eyes were sad. She hadn’t been crying, he could see that much, but he knew her well enough to figure out that she was upset—like, really upset. Guilt bubbles up in his belly.

Mabel sighs and runs her fingers through her hair. He tries his best not to weirdly sniff as the scent of her shampoo washed over him. She shifts further onto his bed, crossing her legs underneath her.

“Look, Dipper...” she says, pressing her index fingers together and looking at the floor (which Dipper is pretty grateful for, seeing as the blush wasn’t shifting from his face). “I know it’s weird I keep pushing you to hang out with us, I know normal brothers and sisters probably don’t do this sort of stuff... but...” Mabel sighs, eyes moving up to his face. “You... you’re my best friend, okay? And I want the three of us to be able to hang out. And I *know* it’s weird, but, like, I don’t *want* it to be weird, you know? I—I just—” She slaps her palms against her legs and the sharp sound of skin on skin jolts him. “I just want you to watch a *movie* with us, Dipper! Is that so hard for you to do?”

Dipper sighs. Because yes, actually, it had become so hard for him to do. And he hated it. *He hated it.* He hated every minute he spent around her and Aiden. He hated the way Aiden made her laugh all the time, the way Mabel always had a big goofy smile on whenever she first saw Aiden at school. He hated the way Aiden always held open doors for her, the way Mabel would knit him sweaters and Aiden would *actually wear them*, like, to school. Where there were people.

Aiden was great. He was literally perfect for Mabel. And Dipper could tell that Aiden liked her. Like, really, *really* liked her. And he could tell that... well, that Mabel liked him too. Like, really, *really* liked him.

And if he was honest, it had nothing to do with Aiden at all, because that was the thing that Dipper hated, that was the thing that made him seethe whenever he caught Aiden doing the sometimes-accidently-doing-that-awkward-voice-cracking-thing when he talked to Mabel; or whenever he caught Mabel doing the embarrassing-hands-shaking-eyes-averting-too-loud-laugh thing when Aiden made a joke.

He hated how much Aiden obviously liked her, like, *really* liked her.

But he hated, *hated* the way Mabel was so totally obviously was completely head over heels in love with this guy.

And around the time that he had realised that... well, that was when it had become too hard for him.

But he couldn't say any of this to her. He couldn't say any of this to anyone.

"Look, Mabel..." Dipper trails off, because... because look Mabel *what*? Look Mabel, I don't want to hang out with you and your boyfriend because you're totally into him? Look Mabel, I can't be around you and your boyfriend because it makes me feel sick at the idea of you being with someone and loving someone who isn't me? Look, Mabel, watching a movie with you and your boyfriend *is* too hard for me because... because...

Dipper closes his eyes. All he wants is for Mabel to leave his room.

When he opens his eyes, she's still there.

"I'll make kettlecorn," she says, offering him a small smile.

He sighs, rubbing his fingers between his eyes.

Look, Mabel...

"... Okay."

She squeals, leaping up and hugging him to her. When she pulls away her grin is wide and goofy and she smacks a kiss on his cheek. "You're the best, Dipper! I'll start making it right away! We'll have tacos, too! And pizza! This will be super fun, you'll see!"

She leaps off his bed and out his door. He reaches up and gently touches his cheek. A few seconds later, when he realises what he's doing, he snatches hand away angrily, grabbing his book and leaning back on his bed again. The blush is still on his cheeks.

Damnit.

by Pines Fix

Morning After

He doesn't sleep after she leaves his room. Instead he lies there watching the door, half hoping she'll come back but fully aware that it is a foolish thing to be hoping for.

He thought it'd be... different. He'd been imagining her in his room, in his bed, for so long. He thought he would find some sort of relief, now that it had happened, now that Mabel had...

He closes his eyes. All he feels is sick.

She had left him.

His stomach turns and he rolls away from the door, staring at the wall.

He wants to get out of his bed, wants to walk over to Mabel's room and sit on her bed with her and talk about this, about all of it, just... just figure the whole thing out, you know? And he's sitting up, halfway through pulling off his sheets, his sheets that still smell like her, before he remembers the way she looked at him, afterwards. She had left so rushed, so hastily, had looked so...

He bites his lip. He thinks the word ashamed before he can stop himself.

He stops pulling at his sheets, sitting there on his bed. He pulls his knees up to his chest and leans his head against them heavily.

He'd spent so long imagining things, you know? Spent so long reading into movements and glances, avoiding her because it seemed like the only way he could stop himself from losing it all again. And he *knows* Mabel, knows her better than anyone else... but... but he did read her wrong, sometimes. And in the darkness of his room, he probably... well, he might have read her wrong again. Because who can do what they did and not *feel* something, right? Right?

Right.

He lies back down in his bed, watching the ceiling. It was a lot to do, a lot to take in, and... well it was terrifying. It was a secret that almost broke him, so of course it could almost break her, alpha-twin or not. Like, if it was paralysing for him, it would be for her too. And maybe *that's* what he saw? Right?

... right.

Dipper sighs.

He was good at lying to everyone but himself.

His hands grip the sheets.

Even though he wants to see her again, wants to talk to her again *so badly*, he knows it's dangerous to go now while his heart is beating so fast, while his hands are shaking so much. He's already given so much of himself tonight. He's not sure if he should—if he *could*—take anymore, give anymore. She needs time, and so, he realises, does he. It... it can wait until tomorrow, to sort things out.

He pulls his covers up around him, but he doesn't sleep. He breathes in deep, smelling her again. It occurs to him this could be the last time he ever does this but he crushes the thought down deep.

No. No.

Don't think that... not yet, anyway.

Instead he watches as light starts to creep into his room. His mind is oddly still, like the calm before a storm. And he knows there's going to be a hell of a storm. He bites his lip. Crap. He'd completely forgotten about Aiden. How Mabel and he were going to sort through that... he had no idea.

But they would. He had to believe they would. Had to believe they could figure this out, that everything would work out okay, that Mabel... that Mabel hadn't been lying when she said she loved him too, high pitched and weak.

And even though he's really, really bad at lying to himself... he lets himself believe this one.

He lies there for what's probably hours, waiting for a sign that Mabel was awake, that she was ready to talk. He knows better than to expect her to come to his room again. Mabel was not one for confronting her feelings. His ears strain for the click of a door or the padding of feet.

Nothing.

Then—

"Mabel!" his Mum calls. He hears her reply, muffled by the walls between them.

She was awake.

He bites his lip. If he's going to catch her, if they're going to *talk* about this, now was his chance—before she had time to organise things with friends, think of excuses to avoid him again.

He shoves on his least smelly shirt and shorts—he could at least try to smell like a normal person for her—and opens his door just to see a swish of a dress around the corner, heading for the stairs.

Shit, he was missing her.

He moves quickly, leaving his door open, and reaches the top of the stairs just as she reaches the bottom—

His heart leaps to his throat.

Aiden.

Mabel and Aiden.

Mabel and Aiden standing together, their heads close; Aiden leaning forward, hand stretching out to link his fingers with hers; Mabel closing her eyes and leaning slightly forward; Aiden closing this distance between them and placing his lips on hers and—

And—

Dipper takes a step back.

No.

Mabel's eyes glance up at him and they meet his, and the way she *looks* at him, *jesus*, it kills him, it fucking *kills* him.

No.

No!

He didn't get a single day. Not a *single fucking day*.

He turns around sharply, ripping his eyes away from her because he can't—he just *can't*—he storms towards his room. His mom will probably yell at him for it later, but he doesn't care. His door slams louder than he means it to, but fuck it. Fuck *all* of it.

He grips his hair violently in his hands and clenches his eyes closed. He desperately wants to scream but he knows Aiden is downstairs and he doesn't want him knowing, doesn't want *anyone* knowing. Instead he lashes out with his foot, kicking his desk hard enough to jolt his lamp off the edge, shattering the lightbulb across the floor. His half-drunk mug of cold tea sloshes over his maths work. Pain screeches up his leg. He clutches his foot.

“Fuck!”

He says it loudly, so loudly it momentarily jars him, before his hand lashes out, hitting the side of his cupboard. The pain is greater than before, and so he swears again, louder, “*Fuck!*” It feels good; but only momentarily. The pain, all of it, comes around too quickly, too intense. He steps towards his bed, not even trying to avoid the glass. He falls onto his bed, face buried in his pillows, breathing hard and deep, pain throbbing in his foot and hand.

Of course.

Of course she didn’t—

Of course she wouldn’t—

He turns around so he is facing the ceiling, pressing his fists into his eyes.

Don’t you cry. Don’t you *fucking* cry.

But it all comes back to him anyway, memories flooding through him even though he tries to stop it. His mind keeps replaying scenes for him. The way she looked at him. The way she stroked his cheek. The way she took off her clothes, the way she watched him take off his. The way she hadn’t really looked him in the eye, afterwards. The way she had left him in his bed sheets, still soaked with their sweat.

And his stomach clenches. He feels bile rise in his throat.

Fuck. *Fuck.*

She had never said yes.

Sure, she had come into his room. She hadn’t pushed him away. She had taken off her clothes. But not once, *not once*, had she said yes. To any of it. And he’d be lying if he said she was never hesitant, lying if he said she never seemed unsure.

He lurches up, his head in his hands, breathing hard and deep, and he feels so sick, he feels so *fucking sick*—because he *knows*, he *knows* what that makes him—and Jesus, *Jesus*—

And he doesn’t want to cry, he *doesn’t*, because he doesn’t have that right, you know? He doesn’t have the right to do anything ever again. His mind keeps jumping, to Mabel in his bed, to Mabel leaving his room, to Mabel at the bottom of the stairs, to Mabel looking at him. To Mabel *looking at him*.

Dipper clenches his eyes closed, clutches the sheets hard in his hands.

No wonder she had looked at him like that.

Would she always look at him like that?

What had he done? What had he done?

And it hits him hard and suddenly, because he knows now, he knows there’s no way Mabel—that of course she wouldn’t ever—

But—but it wasn't just that—because now he'd lost her. He'd really, really *lost her*. Because how could he come back from this? How could he make it up to her, what he'd done? Take back what he did?

And if he was honest he could live without her loving him, could live with her being with someone else, because it hurt, it *fucking* hurt, but she was still his, you know? She was still his sister, and he—they would always have that—

But now... but now—

He's not even fully aware he's crying until he looks down and his shirt is wet. He lies down on his bed. He breathes in deeply, calming the hiccups of his chest, forcing himself to breathe slow and deep and careful.

But now.

He closes his eyes, turns towards the wall.

He's lost her.



Closure

When she opened her locker, literally all of books fell on top of her, knocking her phone out of her hand and smashing her toes in. Perfect. Just perfect.

“Butt nuggets!” Mabel cursed, grabbing her now screen-smashed phone and shoving it into her jeans pocket before grabbing the books she needed and shoving them into her bag. She heaved the others up and slammed them into her locker, sending a loud echo through the hallway. She snapped her locker door closed furiously, turning and leaning against the locker doors.

Stupid Mondays. Stupid forgotten homework. Stupid your-art-lacks-depth-and-meaning feedback from her ‘friend’ Leigh. Stupid Mr Thatcher giving her detention. Stupid Dipper getting mad at her for like, no reason! And then leaving her here to get home alone. Stupid locker. Stupid phone. Stupid *everything*. Stupid *all of it*.

She tried to hold onto the anger but it dissipated all too quickly, turning into her usual mushy sadness. She wished she was one of those awesome old crotchety ladies who seemed to get through life through sheer bitterness. But alas, Mabel Pines was not a bitter person. She was just one of those people that god sad whenever things got a sucky. She sighs, sinking down until she was sitting on the floor and tucking her knees under her sweater.

Today had been... pretty lame.

It was about time she’d had a lame day, she supposed. Like, the last forty-seven days of her life had been pretty darn fantastic. Like, seriously—the best forty-seven days of her entire life.

Mabel had sort of thought that after a week or two Dipper would snap out of it and decide actually no, he was not into any of that jizz, thank you very much. She didn’t *want* him to snap out of it, but she sort of thought it’d be her luck, you know? He like-likes her for months and then when she finally figures out she like-likes him back he realises it’s not the same for him anymore, or whatever. But he hadn’t snapped out of it. And it had been forty-seven days since they had the official are-we-dating talk, making it officially the second longest relationship she’d ever had.

It had been weird at first, figuring out the whole what's-the-deal-with-PDA and reading-each-others-cues sort of thing, but they'd figured it out relatively quickly considering the whole... sibling thing being thrown in there.

Forty-seven days of hand-holding and mackin' on her brother. It had been a great forty-seven days.

Like... apart from the whole... guilt thing.

She tried not to think about it too much, but she couldn't help it. She'd be perfectly fine and then it'd sneak up on her, making her belly twist like she was on a rollercoaster tumbling out of control to her inevitable death. Still, she'd managed to keep it relatively under control, and even though it made her feel really ick, and she avoided Aiden in the hallways like he was the personification of the plague, the past month and a bit had been... really, really nice.

But then day forty-eight had to come along and ruin everything.

It was the dumb guilt that started this day's downward spiral into disaster.

It had been a super great early morning. She'd snuck into Dipper's room and was snuggling (and also morethansnuggling winkwink) with him in his bed, which was still something fun and exciting, even if Dipper's bed was pretty darn gross from his boysweat. But then, halfway through him kissing her up her neck she remembered the time she came here when she was still very much Aiden's girlfriend, and did things with Dipper who was very much not her boyfriend at that point in time. It was pretty hard keeping the mojo going after that, you know? And like, she tried to push Dipper away as nicely as possible, but no matter what she said he kept asking what was wrong and what he was doing wrong, and no amount of nothings and don't worry's would convince him otherwise. And she couldn't just tell him she felt bad about the cheating, you know? For one thing, it was *ages* ago, like, months and months, and for another thing, Dipper seemed to be having enough ethical qualms about the whole sibling sitch without the whole you-were-technically-the-other-dude thing.

Anyway, she ended up just rushing out of bed and leaving without much of an explanation, which yeah, in hindsight that wasn't the most diplomatic thing in the world, but... well, what could she say? He reminded her of Aiden when he looked at her so sad and heartbroken? That wasn't something he wanted to hear.

She sighs, running her fingers through her hair. She *hated* the way Dipper looked at her when she left earlier than they'd planned. It wasn't like she did it often, or anything! Today was only the fourth time it had happened, but still, he always looked so sad and scared, terrified he'd done something wrong that had ruined things, like... like he expected her to be completely disgusted with him, expected her to suddenly regret everything they did. That *hurt*, you know? Like, how many times would she have to tell him she *wanted* this before he actually fully believed her?

So in the morning she was feeling guilty, and sad, and obviously tired, and Dipper was being quiet and weird around her, and her Mum and Dad kept telling her to hurry or she'd be making her and Dipper late for school, and they ran out of coco-pops for breakfast, and she tore a hole in her favourite tights. And the drive to school had been *so* awful. Dipper wouldn't talk to her properly, just looking tight-lipped and sad the whole time, and he wouldn't answer her when she asked what was wrong and told her to just drop it when she tried to bring up leaving early that morning, and, and—ugh! In the end she just stared out the window trying not to cry, and it wasn't until they actually *got* to school that she remembered she forgot her maths homework on her desk.

She had tried to tell Dipper as soon as they pulled up, but he was already unbuckling himself from the car seat and not looking at her *at all*, and he even pulled away when she tried to grab his hand. Ouch. It still hurt, even thinking about it. So even though she was pretty sure Mr Thatcher would not be happy with her, it wasn't like her day could get any *worse*, right?

Wrong. Wrong. So, so wrong.

Not only did she get called out in front of the whole class, she got detention. Like, three hour detention—who even *does* that?

And Dipper had been so angry at her as well, like, even more than the morning. He'd pulled her to the side in the hall between classes and she had kind of hoped dreamfantasy number 72 was going to happen with a sneaky makeout in the janitors closet between classes, but... no. No, that was not what happened.

He'd pulled her between two lockers, frowning, "Mabel, why didn't you tell me you forgot your homework?"

She had twirled her hair around her fingers, still holding out for dreamfantasy 72, or at *least* dream fantasy 37... but no, Dipper had stayed annoyed and glowering. She'd tried to explain to him that it wasn't such a big deal—no dice, "We're almost 17 now, Mabel! You have to start being serious about stuff like this."

That had made her snap. "Oh come *on*, it was just homework! I *tried* to tell you, Dipper! But you weren't talking to me, or listening to me—"

"Come on Mabel that isn't an excuse!"

"But that's what happened!"

"You can't just... just run away and avoid things!"

"Um, are we still talking about the stupid maths homework now?"

"Mabel—"

"Or are you talking about this morning—"

"Mabel," he hissed, looking around, shoulders tense—

“Because it if *is*, Dipper, you don’t have to freak out about it, okay? Because—”

“Mabel!”

He had been so *mad* at her. And yeah, okay, she got it, talking about that stuff in school is way not okay, and even sort of referring to it wasn’t cool seeing as how paranoid Dipper was. She knows she went too far, but... but it was a bad day, and she was annoyed and sad and sleepy, and she just wanted *something* to get settled. She was just trying to make things better, you know? And he didn’t have to *yell* at her. He didn’t have to slap away her hand and storm off and avoid her for the rest of the day.

But that’s what Dipper did. If passive-aggressive confrontation avoidance was a subject, Dipper would be top of the class, no problems. He probably wouldn’t even need to study, he was so good at it. Ugh! He was so impossible sometimes! How could he want to be so mature and act so *immature* all the freaking time?

And then in art class, which was totally 100% *her* class that she kicked *butt* in, her so called friend Leigh had told her that her art lacked depth and meaning! Like, who does that? Who says papier-mâché can’t be something to be taken seriously? Who says pastels and fluors mean your art isn’t deep and meaningful? Who says caricatures of animals only belong in kids toy stores and aren’t anything special?! She *loved* her hamster rock band! If she wanted to make five-foot replicas of Tulio and Hammy D and Butternut Rock, that was *her* biz, not her friends or her teachers or anyone else! If Leigh knew anything about art, she knew that making a five-foot papier-mâché sculpture was, like, a miracle of physics! Something to be in awe of, not scoffed at!

And then detention full of kids throwing stuff at her when the teacher wasn’t looking, and then when she’d finally finished it up and checked around for Dipper she saw that the car had gone and that he’d left her there to figure out her own way back, and she was just so... so... ugh! It had been the worst day, the *worst* day ever, seriously.

She buried further into her arms. Who was she kidding. She totally deserved this bad karma. Heck, she deserved, like, several years bad karma.

She was a cheater. And she was finally getting her comeuppance.

She bit her lip, hard, but her eyes started watering anyway. Ugh, man, she was such a mess. At least there was no one here to see her crying. She was a preeeeetty ugly crier. She stayed like that, curled up into herself, until she heard clicking of heels echoing down the corridor.

Oh, flugelhorn! Who was even still at school at this time!

She rubbed her eyes viciously (if they weren’t red before they sure as all heck were now) and bumbled to her feet as fast as she could with one of her feet asleep. She swung around and opened her locker, shoving her face inside. If there was any sort of justice in the world, whoever it was would see her with her head in the locker, read the very clear visual body language cues, and get the heck out of there without saying anything.

The steps come closer.

The steps stop.

“... ugh, um... Mabel?”

Mabel scrunched up her face.

Oh boy.

Aiden.

Ex-boyfriend Aiden. Left-you-in-the-middle-of-a-dance Aiden. We-were-really-good-friends-but-now-don't-hang-out-at-all-and-you-could-even-say-I-actively-avoid-you Aiden. I-cheated-on-you-with-my-twin-brother Aiden.

Whelp, if today was going to be *this* bad, it may as well go the whole way and become the worst day of her entire life.

She brings her head out of her locker cautiously and looks at him. He's standing with his hands in his pockets, head slightly bent, eyeing her nervously. He was too far away for a friend but too close for a stranger.

“H-hey...” Curses, her voice betrayed her! She bit her lip and turned her head sharply, looking into the confines of her ridiculously messy locker.

Silence.

“Um... Mabel...” She glanced at him. He was running his fingers through his hair, like he always did when he was nervous. He looked at her and they made eye contact, Aiden quickly shifting his eyes down again. He opened his mouth but closed it again, mouth forming a hard line. He looked up at her again. “How... how have you been?”

“Okay.” Her voice is way more high pitched and weirdly voice-breaky than she wanted it to be.

“Yeah?” The disbelief in his voice is pretty darn obvious.

“Yeah.” Mabel breathed deeply. Come on Aiden, take a hint, man! This was *not* the time or the day. Her eyes started to water. Not *now* body, darn it! Ugh!

“Right.” More silence. “Well... I guess I'll see you round then?”

“... uh-huh”

His steps started again. Okay, Mabel, just keep it together until he leaves—

Sniff.

Not just a little sniff. A huge, gigantic sniff. The sniff to end all sniffs. A sniff so big, she was pretty much crying already.

Oh, butt nuggets!

The steps stop suddenly. Mabel bit her lip hard again. Pleaseohpleaseohpleaseohplease—

“... Mabel? Are you okay?”

And he said it so *nicely*, like he used to when they were dating and he could tell something was off about her, like he did when she fought with Dipper, when—when—when—

Oh no, oh crud, come one Mabel, don't start crying now, that isn't fair! You're the one who broke his heart, remember? Don't do this here, don't do this *now*—

But she couldn't help it. Huge tears started rolling down her cheeks. She wished she wasn't such an ugly crier. She buried her face in her hands as a particularly loud sob racked her body.

He was by her side in seconds, hovering there as she desperately tried to get herself under control. But things kept bubbling up, you know? How Dipper had left her here when her day had been so bad, how even art hadn't been able to make things better, how—how *awful* she was, how bad she had been to Aiden, who had only ever been good to her, how she was always screwing up and hurting people and being selfish without even realising it. The sobs kept getting louder and louder and she *knew* she was making a scene but she couldn't make herself stop even though she was trying so, *so* hard.

The words burst out without her meaning them to.

“I'm s-so sorry, Aiden,” she wipes her face furiously but it doesn't do much to stop the tears, “I'm so *s-sorry* I was so *awful* to you and was so mean when you were only ever nice to m-me—”

“Mabel,” his voice is high and panicked, “it's okay—”

“No! It isn't! It isn't okay!” She was pretty sure she sounded hysterical but she was on a roll now and if she was going to make a scene, she would make the biggest scene of all time—Mabel style. She turns fully out of her locker to look at him now. She didn't realise how close he had come, had forgotten how much taller he was than her. She looked up into his worried face and it almost broke her. He was so *nice* to her. He was still so *worried* about her, after everything! After everything she did to him.

She starts up again, fresh tears, moving her arms wildly. “I was so terrible, I was so *mean* to you! Not even the bad guys in teenage movies treat people as bad as I treated you! And I was so mean after too, avoiding you, and you're still so nice to me, and talking to me even though I don't deserve it, and even though I—I—” The tears started to come out too fast again.

His hands hover awkwardly above her arms for a moment before pulling her to him and giving her a hug. Man, she had missed Aiden's hugs. He was good at them. Nice and warm and like, a little too tight sometimes, but in a good way, in the way that made you feel like he really liked you.

She tried to stop herself, but his hugs were too familiar, too comforting, a little like coming home. She leaned into him, bawling into his chest. God, Mabel, seriously? *You* broke up with *him*. In the worst way possible! The only way it could have been lamer is if you did it by text! And here you are, crying into his chest? Are you *serious*?

"It's okay, Mabel," he said into her hair. "You... you don't have to feel so bad about this."

But she did! She did have to feel bad, and if he *knew* why she felt like this, if he *knew* what she did then, then...

He started speaking again. "I get it, okay? I messed up. I don't know what I did wrong, but I know it was something pretty big, for you to end it the way you did. And like, it hurt... if I'm honest it still hurts. But you don't have to feel bad about me messing up, okay? That's my bad, not yours."

She pushed away from him, looking up into his face and shaking her head violently. "No, Aiden! No!" Did he really think that? Did he really think it was all his fault! Man, she really was the worst person in the history of teenage romance. "It's nothing you did!"

"What?"

"Us, me avoiding you, the way I broke up with you—it's nothing to do with you, don't think it's anything to do with you, okay?"

He frowned at her. "But... but it has to have something to do with me?"

"No, no, Aiden." She shook her head violently, pushing his chest with her palms. How could she get him to understand? "It's something I did! Something terrible I did. And... And I'm too much of a coward to deal with it properly, that's all, okay?"

"But what could you have done? I mean, come on!" he gave her a playful pat on the back, "it's not like you cheated or anything, Mabel."

She didn't look at him, staring down, biting her lip. The tears started rolling down her face again. Her heart beat hard in her chest.

"Mabel?"

She doesn't say anything.

"Right," he says, his voice tight. "Well then."

"I'm so sorry." Her voice is as tight as his, small in her chest.

He took his hands away from her side quickly, taking a full step back from her and running his fingers through his hair. He breathed out quickly. “Wow.”

“Aiden—”

“Just give me a second, Mabel.” He shook his head, running both his hands through his hair. He breathed out hard a few times as she stood there, watching him, clenching her fists. Don’t cry, Mabel.

He leaned heavily against a locker, eyes on the floor. “Man. Mabel. I, I just. I can’t believe... this... this is pretty heavy, you know?”

She nodded, rubbing her eyes fiercely—come on, Mabel. Time to deal with what you did, even if it’s really *really* hard, and even if it really, really is not the best day to do this. She took a step back from him, reaching into her open locker and grabbing her bag before closing it.

He looked at her as she put her backpack on. He looked like he did when she broke up with him at the dance. Man, Mabel. When are you going to stop being so awful to this guy? She shook her head. Starting *now*, inner Mabel. Starting now.

“I know I did a terrible thing, Aiden. I know you probably never want to talk to me again, and you know what? That is totally okay. I’ll head home now and never bother you again. You... you can even throw out all those sweaters I made you, if you like.” She breathed in deeply. “But... there’s something I want to say to you first, okay?”

He shrugged his shoulders, kicking the ground. It looked like that was all she would be getting.

Mabel breathed in deeply. She’d been practicing this in the mirror, been thinking about it constantly, and here was her chance to finally set things right—she wouldn’t mess this up, not like she had everything else.

“Aiden... I just... you have to know I’m so sorry to do have done this. I’ve done... well, I’ve done a lot of selfish things before, but doing this, to someone as nice as you, well... it’s awful, and unforgivable, and I want you to know if I could change it, if I could go back and change what I did, and how I treated you, and how it ended, I would.” It was true, too. She left out the part where she’d start dating Dipper right away, because, well, that was beside the point. Anyway, “and... and I know it doesn’t make things better, I know I betrayed your trust in me as a person and a friend, and I know I was a coward for avoiding you afterwards, and I know I’m... I know I’m a bad person...”

Aiden put his face in his hands, quickly rubbing both of his eyes. She felt her stomach grow hot, felt it twist and coil inside her. Oh, Aiden. He looked back at her, eyes still bright.

She sucked her breath in hard. “But I want you to know, Aiden... I’m working on being better. And I promise I’ll... I promise I won’t bother you again, okay?”

She turned on her heel, quickly, bending her head down to hide her face from him as a tear rolled down her face. So much for holding it together.

“Mabel, wait.”

She turned to look at him.

He ran his fingers through his hair again, shifting his weight off the locker so he was standing straight. “I don’t necessarily... *want* that though.”

“... Huh?”

“We were good friends for a while... and... well...” He runs his hands through his hair, sighing. He looked at his hands. “Look, Mabel, this is big news, you know? It’s a lot to deal with, and I don’t really know how I feel about it yet, apart from like... devastated, obviously.”

She nodded quickly, another hot tear rolling down her cheek.

“I don’t know how I feel about this yet, but... I do know you’re not a bad person, Mabel. This would be a whole lot easier to handle if you *were* a bad person, but you’re not, you know? You’re a good person who did a crappy thing. A *really* crappy thing.”

Mabel looked down. She deserved that. It was the truth.

“But that just means that the reason you did that crappy thing was because... well, you obviously really like whoever this guy is. And like, I really wish *I* could be that guy, but I’m not, and there’s nothing either of us can do about that, you know?”

Mabel looked up again, clutching the straps of her backpack. Aiden’s hand dropped by his side and he shrugged at her. “Shit happens, I guess. And shit hurts. But... well... thanks for being honest.”

She nods, letting go of her bag straps and brushing her tears away viciously. “Oh Aiden,” she said, voice breaking a little again. “Why are you being so nice to me?”

“... Well... I hate it when you cry.”

She shook her head, laughing despite herself because he really *was* her dream boy in a lot of ways, wasn’t he? He was so, *so* nice. But he wasn’t right, despite it all. He wasn’t what she needed. “I really hope you find the right person, Aiden,” she said, because it was the truth. “I... I want you to be happy.”

“Yeah, well... I... I want you to be happy too.”

“Even after everything?”

He chuckled a little, shifting his bag over his shoulders. “Yeah, yeah. Even after everything.” He shakes his head one more time before inclining his head towards the other side of the hall. “Come on,” he said, giving her a smile. “I’ll give you a lift home.”

The car ride back was nice. Quiet, but nice, with their favourite radio station playing all the empowering T-Swift songs it could. Maybe it was the universe's way of rewarding her for being honest. She felt a lot better with that secret off her chest, even though she knew she would feel the ramifications of her actions for a little while. She could live with that, though. For some reason, it felt like things were sorting themselves out. Slowly, sure, but it was happening.

Aiden pulled up outside her house and she gave him a smile and a wave and thanked him, climbing out and walking around her side of the car, heading towards her door. As she reached the curb she paused, turning around to look at Aiden as he readjusted a mirror.

"Um, hey... Aiden?" she bit her lip, twisting her foot into the ground.

He looked up at her, "Yeah?"

"Are... are we... okay?"

He turned towards the steering wheel, frowning. Finally, he turns back to her, "I... I don't think we're okay right now."

Her heart deflates a little, "Oh." She could feel her eyes starting to react and looked to the ground quickly. Well, what was she expecting? Forgiveness? It wasn't like he owed her anything.

"But... I think we will be okay. One day."

She looked up at him again. "Yeah?" she's aware her voice is more hopeful than it probably should be, considering everything.

Still, Aiden laughed a little, glancing up and smiling one of his small genuine smiles, "Yeah. Sure. Why not. Just... well, just... give me a little time, I guess."

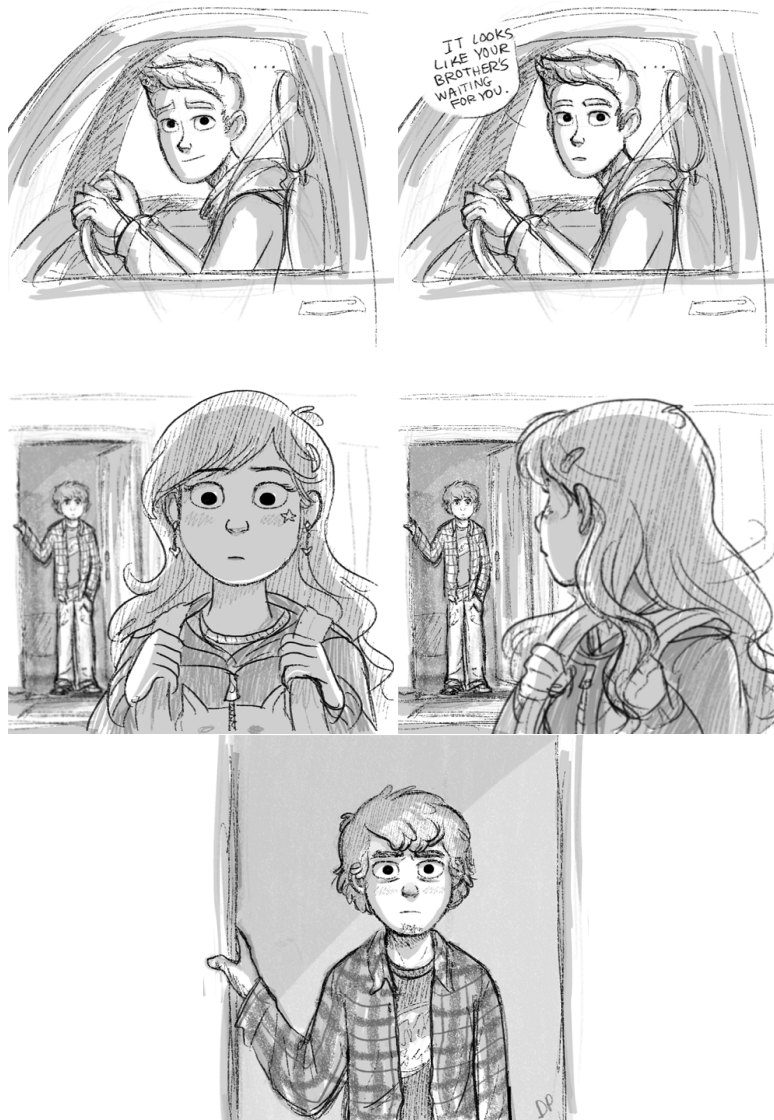
She wipes her face with the back of her hand one last time, smiling back at him again, "O-okay."

His eyes shift behind her, "it looks like your brother's waiting for you."

Mabel freezes, turning and looking behind her. Dipper was standing in the doorway, hand clutching the frame, watching the two of them. It was too far away to get a good read on his face.

"Um, well... I guess I'll see you Monday," Aiden said behind her. She turned back to face him as he lifted his hand and gave her and Dipper a wave taking off down the street. She didn't have to look behind her to know she was the only one who waved goodbye.

She turned back towards Dipper but the doorframe was empty. She sighed.



She took a deep breath in, shifted her bag on her shoulders, and walked towards her home, dropping her bag inside the door, "Hey! Dipper! Wait up! I want to talk to you!"

After all, she had another mess she made that she had to clean up.

But she'd learned from her last one. Hopefully this time, she would make less mistakes.

by inlineforpines

Buried Deep

In the beginning, Dipper didn't think much of it. It had come so slowly, it was impossible to notice what was even happening.

His glances would last ever-so-slightly longer than normal. He'd notice the sweet smell of her shampoo or the shine of her lipgloss when they sat next to each other on the couch. Smile involuntarily when he heard her on the phone down the hall, her laughter like music. She was his sister, and he loved her. That was perfectly normal.

A few weeks went by. He'd lie awake at night, staring at the ceiling and thinking about the moments they spent together that day talking, walking, getting ready for school, singing at the top of their lungs along with the car radio, eating dinner, marathoning Netflix, whatever. And thinking about how happy she made him. How he just felt... more *whole* when he was with her. That was still normal, right? They were best friends. They always had been.

And yet, in his gut, he knew that these feelings were different. He had to actively stop himself from thinking about her. Even though they'd spend practically every day together, he felt almost sick with longing.

A few more weeks went by, and those innocent little glances occasionally (okay, more than occasionally) looked at not-so-innocent places when she was facing the other way. When she let him go after a hug, his body would ache, wishing that it could have lasted a little longer. Every little touch made his stomach flutter like a caged butterfly. He would think about holding her hand and linking their fingers together as they walked. More than once, when they were just talking casually, he would feel an overwhelmingly strong urge to lean in and kiss her, at which point he would mentally slap himself for being a pervert followed by a horrible combination of guilt and self-deprecating thoughts along the lines of *God, Dipper, you're so disgusting. What the fuck is wrong with you? This is MABEL, your SISTER.*

He knew that having those kinds of feelings for her was nowhere close to normal. But, by that time, it was too late to find any way of stopping.

Right now, Dipper tries to keep busy with his schoolwork and extracurriculars, but he can't escape his thoughts forever. He avoids being alone with her for too long, but he can't just stop hanging out with her when they've done so their whole lives. It's hardest when there are no distractions, when it's just him alone and his thoughts are left to wander.

He can't even tell if he's acting normally around her anymore. Like always, he just overanalyzes the crap out of everything. What did he even used to act like before all this started? They can hug each other sometimes, right? That kind of stuff was okay. But how *much* did they do that kind of stuff? When she makes a joke, how long is he supposed to keep laughing? How often is he supposed to make eye contact with her? Once, when he was feeling particularly desperate, he tried looking at old home videos just to take notes on how they interacted before this shit started. But that only helped so much. It's hard to remember how he's *supposed* to act when pretty much all he can think about is how he *wants* to act.

Then, one night, he dreams about her. It's a mess of interlocking fingers, caresses, loving whispers, all escalating into gentle but firm pressure on his lips, embracing, a fistful of her hair, and then flesh against flesh and gyrating hips and moaning and grinding again and again and again. . .

What's left of Dipper's moral compass jolts him awake. He's panting, his mouth dry and his sheets covered with sweat. Sitting up, Dipper holds his head in his hands, chest heaving. The memory of the dream is still so painfully vivid. He looks up and stares blankly at the wall, heart still thumping away in his chest. God, it was just a friggin' dream and he's this freaked out? Why does it feel like so much more than that. . . ?

The realization hits him like he's been run over by a semitruck.

"I love her," he whispers.

He holds his breath for a moment, then says it again, stronger this time, his words truer than anything he's ever known. "I love her." A faint smile cracks his lips and he sighs, indescribably relieved after finally admitting it to himself, putting his feelings out into the open air.

But then his logical Dipper instincts inevitably kick into full gear, smacking him over the head. *Dipper, this is so messed up. This is so, SO totally fucked up. Why would you be thinking this? What the hell is wrong with you?! She's your SISTER! You CANNOT be having these kinds of feelings for her.*

And yet, those feelings are still there. . . They have been for a while now. He was just too afraid to admit it to himself.

She will NEVER love you that way. Ever. And why would she? Normal people don't fall in love with their twin siblings. Normal people certainly don't want to do that stuff with their twin siblings.

But what if, somehow... Mabel could love him back? It's not like that kind of thing's never happened before. Royal brothers and sisters would get married in, like, Ancient Egypt, right? Above anything, he knows that she loves him as her brother. There's no question about that. They've spent their whole lives together and know each other better than anyone. But maybe, she could see him as something more than just family. It's probably impossible, but maybe she already does... The thought of it makes his hopeful heart ache.

Logical Dipper whacks him on the head again, harder this time. *THIS IS NOT GAME OF THRONES. YOU ARE NOT JAIME LANNISTER AND SHE IS NOT CERSEI, DAMMIT.*

He's stunned by how ridiculous it sounds when he makes the comparison. Fine, logic, you're right. Even if he somehow worked up enough courage to tell her, how the hell was she supposed to deal with that kind of information? He would just be pushing all of his problems onto her, which is entirely unfair and selfish. It would fuck up their entire relationship. He'll lose his closest friend. No.

No, he has to deal with this on his own.

Dipper holds his head in his hands again, squeezing his eyes shut, trying to banish the memory of his dream from his mind. But the more he tries to erase it, the more he wishes it was real. Oh god, how the hell did this even happen? How did it come this far? Get back to reality. He has to try and forget about her. If he just tries hard enough, his feelings for her will go back to the way they were. He... he could try to find someone else, maybe. He has to move on eventually.

He HAS to.

...but he can't.

He becomes very, very good at hiding it, though. Scary good. It's like now that he's finally admitted it to himself, he's all the more determined to protect her from the insane amounts of weirdness going on in his head.

The easiest method of getting the smaller-tiered Mabel thoughts out of his head, stuff like *"Wow, she looks cute in that short skirt,"* or *"Wow, her lipgloss looks nice,"* is to picture Grunkle Stan buck naked, but that only lasts for so long. The thoughts return later only to progress into things like *"God, her legs are beautiful,"* or *"God, her lips look so soft."* In this case, he forces himself to do long division over and over in his head, and avoids making eye contact with her for a while by pretending to read or mess with his phone. In the worst cases, the thoughts turn into things along the lines of *"Oh God, I want to hold her in my arms and kiss her so badly I feel like I'm going to die,"* after which he blushes furiously and has to leave the room, choking out some lame bathroom excuse or something on his way out. Miraculously, she never seems to notice him acting out-of-the-ordinary. If she does, it's not strange enough for her to say anything about it. To his knowledge, his efforts are working.

That is, they work until Mabel tells him about Aiden.

One Friday after school, Mabel is absolutely ecstatic. He sees her skipping down the hall at lightning speed. “OH MY GOSH. Ohh my gosh. AAAH. Oh. My. GOSH. Dipper. DIPPER. DIPPER!” She practically runs him over at his locker, knocking a book out of his hand.

“Ah geez, Mabel,” he groans. He bends over to pick it up, but she beats him to it.

“Sorry, broseph! Here you go.” She hands the book back, then lets out a little squeal, jumping up and down and smiling fiercely. “Dipper, I’ve got some GREAT news!”

“Um, ok. What’s the news?” he asks cautiously.

She grabs both of his shoulders and stares at him, excitement sparkling in her eyes. He can feel his heart beating faster at the contact and waits for her response, his mind racing. What could possibly be making her so... bubbly? Like, more than usual?

“Aiden from my math class asked me out!”

Dipper’s heart drops like a rock. She’s been over her “crush-of-the-week” phase since freshman year. If she’s into a guy now, it means it’s actually serious. The real deal. *Oh, no. Please, no. Oh my God, this can’t be happening.*

Mabel is brimming with happiness. She lets go of his shoulders and starts to babble, her hands gesturing all over the place. “I can barely believe it! He just pulled me aside and asked, ‘Do you wanna go out with me?’ And then I was like, ‘Heck yeah!’ And he was all, ‘Ok, cool!’ Oh, it was like magic. The stars aligned and... Man, isn’t this so fantastic?!”

Logical Dipper chimes in, his voice cynical. *Of course this was gonna happen. What did you expect, Dipper? That she would just wait around? For YOU? Idiot, idiot, idiot...*

...

“Uh, hello? Earth to Dipper.” She knocks her knuckles a few times on the top of his head. “Did you hear what I said? Aiden Zimmerman, who is basically a real-life DREAM BOY, just asked me out!”

He snaps out of his internal argument. Mustering up all the enthusiasm he can, he gives her what he hopes is a genuine-looking smile. “Wow, really? That’s great, Mabel. Congratulations.”

But she knows him too well. Her grin fades and her eyebrows furrow in confusion. “What’s wrong? Come on, don’t you go all overprotective on me, bro-bro. He’s a really nice guy, I promise.”

Right. Overprotective. That’s what he is. Sure.

“No Mabel, it’s ok. I’m happy for you.” Somehow, he manages to make it convincing enough for her to go back to grinning.

“Ooh, I’m so excited! I like him and he likes me back! It’s just so. . . GAH! This is so great.”

Dipper nods and gives her a thumbs up. “Alright then, cool.” He pauses awkwardly, but Mabel is too busy doing a happy dance to notice. “Sooo, why are you telling me this? Shouldn’t you be talking to Beth or Kaitlyn or something?”

“Well, because you’re my best friend, Dip! Duh. I mean, I’ll tell them later when we got more time to chat it all up.”

Aaand there it is. Friends. That’s all they’ll ever be. That’s all they ever *should* be.

“Oh, right. Duh,” Dipper says, lightly smacking himself on the side of his head jokingly, hoping that it seems normal to her. He pauses, then asks, “Ok, so are you going home now, or. . .?”

She looks up at the ceiling, then back at him, twiddling a strand of her hair around her index finger. “Actually, that’s the other thing I wanted to tell you. Aiden offered to take me to the movies tonight, so I was gonna go skee-daddle with him.” She makes little walking motions with her fingers.

His heart sinks even further. “Oh,” he sighs. “Ok. Whatever.” Mabel detects his depressed tone and how much he’s trying to make it sound not-depressed. She opens her mouth to say something when a voice shouts from down the hallway.

“Hey, Mabel!”

It’s Aiden. He starts to walk over to her, grinning from ear to ear. She smiles and waves at him frantically. His athletic gait and muscly build has Mabel swooning before he even gets close. His blond hair is gelled in a style that’s almost too pointy to be real. Of course, Dipper automatically assumes that he’s a jerk despite what Mabel said. God, how could Mabel fall for a jerk?! She should know better than that.

But then he reaches them and holds out his right hand to Dipper, smiling. “Hey, man! I’m Aiden. You must be Dipper. Mabel’s told me a lot about you.”

Dipper stares at his hand for a moment before tentatively shaking it. Aiden’s grip is strong and friendly. Ok, so maybe he’s not a jerk. Good. For him. “Hi, Aiden. Nice to meet you.” His tone doesn’t sound quite as genuine as he’d hoped it would, but Aiden doesn’t know him well enough and Mabel is too distracted to notice.

Mabel grins at both of them. “Now, ain’t this neat! My two favorite boys are finally meeting.”

Aiden laughs. “Gosh, Mabel, I’m one of your favorite boys? You’re making me blush.” He rubs the back of his head awkwardly, flashing a toothy smile at her.

She takes his hand sweetly, interlocking their fingers and looking up at him. “Of course you are, you big cutie!” she says, causing him to blush harder.

Wow, he's just as much of a dork as I am.

Aaaand great, now they're making goo-goo eyes at each other. Dipper claps his hands together in front of him, reminding them that yes, he's still here. "Okee dokee then. Well, I'm just gonna go... so yeah. See you guys later."

Mabel snaps out of her honeymoon-phase stupor. She waves with her free hand. "Okay. Bye, Dip! See ya at home."

"Later, dude," Aiden adds.

"... Yeah."

Dipper throws the last book in his backpack, zips it up as quickly as he can, and slings it over his shoulder. He slams the locker shut and walks away, trying as hard as he can not to make it obvious that he wants to punch something. As soon as he turns the corner, out of sight, he groans under his breath.

"Shit."

He makes it to the parking lot and climbs inside his and Mabel's old van, tossing his backpack onto the back seat.

The ten minute drive home feels like it lasts ten seconds. Once he pulls into the driveway, Dipper just sits there and stares blankly out the windshield, still processing what just happened. Ok, so Mabel has an actual boyfriend now. He should be happy for her, just like he told her. She deserves to be happy. She *has* to be happy. Even if that means he has to keep his feelings for her buried deep.

Dipper leans his head against the steering wheel and mumbles under his breath, his voice cracking from the waves of anxiety fully catching up to him.

"How the *hell* am I gonna keep this up?"

On Board

It's Friday night, and their mom and dad are out at a work dinner party for at least the next 5 hours. It's a rare opportunity, and they both know it. They didn't actually say anything about it to each other, but Mabel had dropped several innuendo-laced hints throughout the day to make it pretty obvious what her plans were. That morning, she'd licked a huge spoonful of peanut butter while making dangerously flirtatious eye contact. Dipper almost choked on his cereal. Then, at school, she somehow managed to slip him like 15 glitter-covered dirty notes into his locker (all of which he stuffed into his backpack and read while hidden away in a toilet stall between classes, blushing furiously). Not to mention the countless cheeky winks and eyebrow raises. It was probably a bit over the top, but Dipper loved her for it, and he sure as hell wasn't protesting.

Their parents left shortly after the twins came home from school to beat the traffic, but Dipper made himself wait over a half hour to go into her room just to be safe. Ever the cautious one.

He raps softly on her doorframe. "Hey, Mabel. Um, Mom and Dad have been gone for awhile now, so I was thinking that—*mmmff!*" Whatever was left of his sentence is interrupted by a pair of determined lips on his and arms locked around his neck. Mabel had been hiding behind the open door and jumped him. Stunned, Dipper can only stand there, eyes wide, as his sensations catch up with him. After a few seconds, his brain clicks and he finally begins to return her fervor by bringing his hands to her back and pulling her into him, then tilting his head so he can sink deeper into their kiss. She runs her fingers through his curly hair, knocking the pine tree hat off his head.

There's a faint little smacking sound when their lips finally break apart.

"...hi," he whispers, breathless.

When she sees his lovestruck face, lips barely parted and eyes half-lidded, she can't help but giggle at her handiwork. "Oh, man, I've been waiting to do that all DAY," she admits, leaning in to give him another quick kiss.

"Um, how long were you hiding back there?" Dipper asks. He's still having a hard time taking in air, as now she's moved on to teasingly peck the corners of his lips.

“Thaaat’s not important,” Mabel says against his skin.

“Yeah, well, you scared the crap out of—o-oh my god...” His words fizzle out when she presses her lips against his pulse point and gently sucks the skin there. He unwittingly lets out a half-sigh, half-moan, and she responds by humming against his neck. He bites his lower lip. It occurs to him that it’s almost ridiculous how quickly Mabel can get him fired up like he is now.

Her fingers move to his shirt, pointedly unbuttoning each button and slipping it off his shoulders. She breaks away to tug at the bottom of his undershirt. The shameless part of his brain protests, but Dipper’s hands grip hers and push the shirt back down. “W-wait, Mabel. I... I gotta talk to you before we go any further.”

She pouts a little at the sudden water on the fire, but resigns. “Oh, mkay,” she says. Mabel plops on her bed and pats the space next to her. She puts her elbows on her thighs and holds her head in her hands. Still blushing from before, but giving him her best listening face.

He pulls his flannel back back over his shoulders and sits next to her with a deep breath. “Ok, so... I’ve been thinking about some stuff.”

She raises an eyebrow. “Well that’s pretty vague.”

“Uh, y’know... this kind of stuff.” He clears his throat, trying to cool down but sort of failing at the moment.

“Oooh,” Mabel replies and lets out a mischievous giggle. She scoots closer to him.

“Yeah.” Dipper smiles a little before his face falls and he looks up at her. “I know that tonight’s gotta be *the* night, since it’s the best chance we’ll get for a while. It’s just that, um, I wanted to make sure I did things right this time around. I wanted to make sure that... that you were on board with it.”

Mabel grabs one of his hands and uses her other to tilt his chin up. “Dipper, you don’t need to be so nervous. I mean, come on, we are like on FIRE tonight with making out. Of course I’m on board with it!” She cups one hand and talks out the side of her mouth. “Aaand, in case you’ve forgotten, we were practically doin’-the-do through our clothes earlier this week.”

Her brother is caught off guard by her bluntness and blushes harder. But then he squeezes his eyes shut and shakes his head a little, trying to clear his head and remember exactly what he wanted to say. “I know, I know that we’ve done other stuff since we started going out. Which was great, I’m not gonna lie.” He lets out a weak laugh. “But... Mabel, the first time, I took us too far too fast without even knowing for sure if that was what you wanted. And I—I don’t ever want to make that same mistake again.”

Dropping Dipper’s hand, she stands up from the bed and looks at him incredulously. “Hold up. Do you *still* think that the whole thing was your fault?”

Judging by the way he's looking at her now... that would be a yes. His face is just—it makes her heart sink deep in her chest. He looks so guilty, probably beating himself up with harsh, derogatory thoughts. Taking all the blame for what happened that night and all the awkwardness that followed. Which makes pretty much zero sense, because she was the one that just threw his feelings right back in his face after he told her he *loved* her. All because she was in denial, and because it took her *waaay* to long to realize that she felt the same way.

He nods, looking at the floor. "I was the one who kissed you first. I started it." Dipper talks like he's said the same thing in his head a million times over, his voice is filled with shame. Why is he still punishing himself for this? Mabel wonders how his brain deals with so much horrible self-deprecation.

"No, Dip," she insists. "I came into your room that night on my own terms. It was just as much my fault as yours."

"Mabel, it's not your—"

"Yes it *is*." She sits, takes his hands again, and bores her eyes into his. "Look, Dipper, lemme tell you something. Last time, I was just too flippin' afraid to admit that I wanted you as much as you wanted me. That I loved you *back*. I thought you knew that, you big dork."

She sighs and snakes her arms around his waist, pulling him towards her and keeping her brown eyes fixed on his. "I won't let you keep beating yourself up about what happened. It takes two to tango, Dipper. It was both of us."

He furrows his brow, and it looks like he's having an intense internal argument. Whew boy, this poor kid is an adorable piece of work. Always trying to take the fall for her, always trying to make sure she's okay. Not that she ever doubted it, but he really does care for her as much as he says he does. And she loves him all the more for that.

Determined to knock that dumb guilty look off his face, her voice is resolute. "Let me be perfectly clear: I am definitely, one thousand percent, ab-so-freakin'-lutely on board with having sexy times with you."

When he looks up at her, his eyes are so hopeful and loving that it makes her heart flutter like crazy. "You're sure?" he asks.

"Positive."

His chest heaves as he takes a deep breath. Then, he takes her face in his hands and slowly touches his lips to hers, pouring himself into their kiss. Her eyes flutter shut.

And they pick up right where they left off. Now that they're entirely on the same page, he's finally not holding back anymore. His fingers find their way underneath her sweater and trail along her hipbones, up the sides of her ribs. He steals a soft squeeze over her bra before swiftly slipping his hand under it.

NOW we're gettin' somewhere, Mabel thinks, no shame whatsoever, focusing hard on what he's making her feel. She breaks their lips apart to kiss and nibble at his earlobe, which only makes him grip her breasts more boldly.

Mabel lifts up her arms. Ever perceptive, he understands her intentions quickly and pulls her sweater and camisole off in one fluid movement before tossing them next to the bed. Her hands tug at Dip's shirt again, so he pulls back and allows her to take off his button-up and yank his undershirt over his head.

"Unhook me?" she asks, pulling her long brown hair over one shoulder and turning her back to him. Dipper fumbles a bit (bless, his hands are sorta shaky), but he succeeds in undoing the clasp. She turns back around and drops her bra dramatically to the floor, biting her bottom lip and shooting him the best sexy look she can muster.

It's still a pretty novel thing for him, so he can't help but stare for a bit too long.

"Whatcha lookin' at, bro-bro?" Mabel asks. She wags her eyebrows and twirls a strand of hair around one finger.

He blushes, but rolls his eyes in an attempt to save his pride. "You. Duh. You're beautiful, Mabel."

His words are so sincere that it makes her little heart sing. "C'mere, Dips, I wanna tell you something," she says.

One eyebrow of his goes up inquisitively. Dipper moves right beside her and Mabel leans to put her mouth next to his ear.

Her lips brush softly against his ear as she whispers, "Hey, guess what. I love you."

Before she can do anything else, he quickly moves to kiss her neck.

"I love you, Mabel," he whispers back, his lips ghosting her skin. With fingers trailing along her ribs and across to her newly freed breasts, Mabel sighs and clutches his bare back.

Holy wow, this kid knows how to treat a gal, she thinks to herself. But now, she's getting more and more antsy to up the ante here. Like, right now. Mabel's hands find their way to the waist of his jeans and swiftly undo his belt buckle, then the button and zipper. Dip must be as anticipative as she is because she notices that he's already got a sizable tent in his boxers by the time she pulls his pants off.

One of her hands dives right in under the waistband and grips his erection, succeeding in making him let out a low, choked moan at her touch. She starts massaging him slowly and rhythmically as she takes his lips again, slipping her tongue inside his mouth and rolling it against his with a vengeance before he has to break away, gasping and cursing under his breath as she picks up the pace.

Dipper's hand finds its way under the hem of her skirt. It runs up the inside of her thigh until it finds her underwear, stroking two nimble fingers right over her clit and making her hum happily with the sudden ecstatic pleasure. She bites her bottom lip and sighs

ardently, which makes him rub her harder and with more precision. All the while she refuses to slow her own hand's pace, and can't help but give herself a mental high-five because *man*, she's really doing a number on him. His face is contorted in a way that's somehow cute and, she admits, sorta-kind-a-really sexy at the same time, his brow furrowed with concentration, cheeks flushed, and lips slightly parted with labored breathing. And *oh MAN*, he's really doing a number on her as well. She keeps letting out little squeaks and gasps every other times she exhales. It's sooo nice to be vocal and without worrying about someone walking in or overhearing them for once.

Soon, this whole mutual pleasure-giving sesh comes to a boil and they both slowly stop their incessant rubbing. Their eyes meet and Mabel's heart floods with happiness for like the fifty billionth time that night at the loving, longing look he's giving her. She leans in to kiss him once again, molding their lips together and reveling in the surging feeling in her stomach and between her legs.

She leans back again to see his face clearly. "Dipper, you ready to go?" she asks a little bit too quickly. But hey, she's quite an eager beaver right now.

"Uh, *yeah*," he answers a bit too fast as well.

"Okey dokey then. Let's get this show on the road." Mabel says the last part with a low voice, trying to sound as seductive as possible, but sorta fails when she giggles at the end of her sentence. Dipper takes it anyway, nodding curtly. He smiles, looking nervous but very, very excited.

Promptly, she stands up from the bed and shimmies out of her flowy skirt before slipping off her polka-dot underwear. Dipper removes his boxers and throws them with the rest of his clothes pile. Now that they're both completely naked, Mabel turns to him and pokes her pointer finger on his chest to push him down onto the bed. She crawls over him and straddles his body, trailing the same finger up and down over his chest. Dipper takes both hands and touches the creamy skin on her stomach and back before resting them on her hips. It takes her a moment to position herself in the right place, but when she does, she reaches down and takes his erection in her hand. She decides to test the waters by teasing him deliberately against her wet entrance.

His head rolls back into the pillow and he moans, "Nnngh, o-oh *fuck*, Mabel..." Wanting to hear him make those noises again, she does it again, a bit harder, and there's a low rumbling noise that bubbles up from his chest, on the verge of a growl. She could probably go on like this for a while if she was feeling more evil today, just to hear him keep making those delectable noises. But, she opts to cut him some slack and stop the teasing. With her hand, she positions his hard-on just inside her entrance. Then, slowly, slowly, she sinks her hips down over him until her bare bottom reaches his legs.

Alright, she takes it back. This is what she's been waiting to do all day. It's the same feeling she felt the night they first did this—the complete and overwhelming fullness of being with him.

Mabel stays still for a brief moment before her small voice asks, “Y-you okay, Dip?” He can only nod in response. She takes that as an okay to start moving, so she begins by rolling her hips carefully over his. She feels him twitch inside her when she finds her rhythm, and he brings up his own hips to meet the pace. There’s a quiet smacking sound each time one’s skin meets the other to accompany their stifled grunts and unabashed sighs. Dipper takes one hand off her hip to reach up and fondle her breast, making her hum contentedly.

It still amazes her that Dipper, her brother, who’s always looked out for her and been her best friend her entire life, is so amazingly capable of making her feel like she does now. Their minds and bodies are together in a way that makes her believe that, in this moment, she’s so much more than just herself. . . It’s warm and intimate and makes her want to curse herself for ever having any doubts, even if the doubts weren’t entirely unfounded in the first place for. . . obvious reasons. But, you know what, screw the flippin’ taboo. She’s so sure of herself now, and it just feels right to be with him this way. They love each other, and want each other to feel good. That’s all there is to it.

Suddenly, Dipper sits up and captures her lips in his, clinging to her small frame. Her blunt nails dig into his back as his thrusts grow quicker and more desperate. They both start to sweat from all the body heat building between them. Breaking their kiss, Dipper ducks his head to suck and nip at her pulse. He says her name like a curse and a prayer against her skin.

“O-oh my god, *Dipper*, sweet—*aah*, sweet moses,” she groans, tossing her head to the side so he can kiss her neck fully. He must have had an unforeseen wave of confidence because he hugs her tighter before tipping her back down to the bed, pulling her bottom closer to him so he can enter her more deeply. Dipper props himself up on his elbows and the twins make burning eye contact, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing but each other. Everything emotion she’s experiencing is so raw and sensual that she feels completely vulnerable, but unbelievably safe all at the same time.

Then, never stopping their rhythmic movement, he sinks his lips down over hers and moans into her mouth, sending tingles down her spine as she digs her fingers into his curly brown hair. They’re forced to break apart to gasp for air. Dipper reaches behind him to grab her thigh and gets better leverage, making Mabel squirm underneath him and cry out. He thrusts into her over and over again, and she brings her hips up hard to meet his.

Her legs wrap tightly around his back as he pushes her over the edge, her face contorting as an unrestrained moan comes bursting from deep within her throat. She clutches him like a lifeline while wave after wave of overwhelming pleasure floods her senses. Behind her eyelids, squeezed shut, Mabel’s pretty sure she’s actually seeing stars. Dipper follows her quickly, climaxing only a few seconds later and burying his head in the crook of her neck. He curses and groans as he trembles and twitches inside of her. They hold each other in this moment of complete, uninhibited ecstasy, which lasts for an unusually long time for the both of them.

Finally, their bodies stop shuddering as they slowly come down from their high. He pulls out and their lips meet in the middle for a soft, delectably sweet kiss. She meets his gaze and holds his face in her hands, whispering “I love you.”

“And I love you,” he responds immediately, kissing her again. They both smile faintly at each other, very much exhausted but entirely satisfied.

After a moment’s rest, Dipper kisses her cheek before he rolls off the bed to grab the tissue box on Mabel’s desk. He takes out a couple then hands the box to her, and they both go to work on cleaning up her sheets and themselves. When they’re done, Dipper gathers up the dirty tissues and attempts to toss a few into a trash can across the room, but he misses by a good five feet and has to pick them off the ground to properly throw them away, grumbling to himself. Mabel laughs, balling up a few of her own and making three baskets in a row.

“Ok, that’s just showing off,” he scoffs.

“Pfft, when you got it, you got it, broseph,” she shrugs. “But hey, teamwork!” She holds her hand up.

“Yeah, sister!” Dipper high-fives her with a loud *smack*. They start giggling.

The heat in the room has finally cooled down, so the twins are able to get their breathing rates back to normal. Dipper wipes his forehead, grimacing. “Geez, I’m so sweaty. Like, more than usual.”

Mabel laughs. “Well that just means you were workin’ hard, Dipper! And, by the way, that was like, A plusplusplusPLUS sexy times. I mean, we even came at the same time, how awesome was THAT?” She punches him in the shoulder.

He blushes, scratching the back of his head awkwardly and smiling. “Yeah it was... it was really great for me, too.”

God, she loves this sweaty nerd.

“Anyways,” she continues, “sweat’s a problem that can be solved easily. It’s shower time, mister.” Her finger pokes repeatedly against his bare chest. Dipper chuckles, then he raises an eyebrow.

“Wait, you mean together?” he asks.

“Mmm-hmmm,” she responds before planting a big dramatic smooch on his cheek. She grabs both his hands and pulls him towards her bedroom door, only taking a few steps before her brother stops in his tracks.

“Oh, shit,” he says suddenly, looking down.

“What, what is it?”

“... Buttons is in the doorway.”

“Haha, seriously?” she asks, turning around to see. And what do you know! There sits their old cat, his grey tail swishing back and forth. He’s staring at them with big, dark eyes.

Mabel crouches down and points a faux-angry finger at him. “Buttons, you saw NOTHING,” she scolds jokingly, then holds her hand out so he can nuzzle her. Apparently that’s all the attention he wanted, though, because he promptly turns and saunters off down the hallway, disappearing around the corner.

“Well, ok then. Who needs Buttons. I’ve got my favorite bro-bro-boyfriend to keep me company.” She attacks him with a hug and peppers kisses all over his face.

Dipper laughs and returns her embrace. “Yup, and I’ve got my, uh... sis-sis-girlfriend to hang out with?” He shrugs. “Eh, doesn’t sound as good when it’s not an alliteration.”

“That’s ok, Dip, you’ll figure something out,” she says, kissing the tip of his nose. “Now, c’mon, let’s go get some soap all up in here.”

Dipper nods.

They run hand in hand down the hall to the bathroom, buck naked, ducking under windows and laughing all the while. When they finally reach it, Dipper slams the door behind them. Mabel pushes him against the wall, wasting no time in capturing his lips in hers, rolling their tongues together, and getting fired up all over again.

The next day, the Pines family sits down together for a breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon, and waffles. Mabel goes straight for the syrup and pours almost half of what’s left in the container over her waffle. She tops it with copious amounts of whipped cream and strawberries.

“Honey, will you please remember to brush your teeth after you eat that waffle-zilla?” her dad asks, eyes peering behind a newspaper. “They’re going to fall right out of your gums if you don’t at least try to handle your sugar addiction.”

“Mm-hmm. Cah do, dah,” she responds with her mouth full. Dipper snorts at how ridiculous she sounds.

She chases her giant bite down with some orange juice. “Hey, when the sugar monster calls, you gotta feed it. Am I right, Dipper?”

He chuckles, rolling his eyes. “Sure, Mabes.”

His sister laughs back at him and sneakily stretches her leg to pat the top of his foot with hers under the table, unseen. He pretends to be focused on eating, but looks at her briefly out of the corner of his eye and fights to hold back a smile.